

REPORT TO:	AUDIT SUB-COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 9
DATE OF MEETING:	14th DECEMBER 2016	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES LEGAL and DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER/MONITORING OFFICER	OPEN
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SUBJECT:	LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE	
WARD (S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: AS 04

1.0 Recommendation

- 1.1 That the changes to the national framework for delivering good governance in local government are considered and noted.
- 1.2 That the Council adopts the new national framework for its Local Code of Corporate Governance.
- 1.3 That the assessment of the Council's arrangements within the new framework as detailed in Appendix 1 is considered and noted.
- 1.4 That the areas identified to strengthen governance are considered and approved.
- 1.5 That progress on the approved actions stemming from the Council's Annual Governance Statement for 2015/16 are considered and approved.

2.0 Purpose of the Report

- 2.1 To assess the Council's governance arrangements against an updated national framework and to report progress on actions arising out of the Council's Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2015/16. This is in accordance with a requirement to review the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance on a half-yearly basis.

3.0 Detail

Background

- 3.1 In April 2016, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) published an updated national framework for ensuring proper and robust governance in local authorities.
- 3.2 This followed a review undertaken by an appointed working group, consisting of Members, Officers and Auditors, to review governance arrangements in a rapidly changing and challenging environment. The existing national framework was last reviewed in 2007.
- 3.3 The updated framework is set against a background of limiting resources, greater collaborative working including devolved arrangements, together with an expectation for greater transparency. The new framework applies from the financial year 2016/17 and if adopted, will form the basis of the Council's AGS for 2016/17.
- 3.4 The main aim of corporate governance has not changed; it is still about having a system by which a local authority directs and controls its functions and relates to its local community.
- 3.5 Good corporate governance is considered to be essential in demonstrating that there is credibility and confidence in public services. Sound arrangements should be founded on openness, integrity and accountability, together with the overarching concept of leadership.

The Updated Framework

- 3.6 The framework is still based on a set of core principles, although these have changed in some areas as detailed later in the report. The national framework is intended to assist authorities individually in reviewing and accounting for their own approach.
- 3.7 The overall aim is to ensure that resources are directed in accordance with agreed priorities, that there is sound and inclusive decision making, together with clear accountability for the use of resources to achieve intended outcomes for local communities.
- 3.8 Greater focus has been placed upon demonstrating economic, social and environment sustainability over a longer-term, together with the principles of social value.

The Core Principles

- 3.9 The following table shows the core principles of the updated framework, compared to those that have been used since 2007.

Principles from 2016	Principles from 2007
Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law.	Promoting values for the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behavior.
Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.	Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.
Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.	Focusing on the purpose of the authority and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area.
Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.	<i>There was not a direct equivalent</i>
Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.	Developing the capacity and capability of Members and Officers to be effective. Members and Officers working together to achieve a common purpose and clearly defined functions and roles.
Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.	Taking informed decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk.
Implementing good practice in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.	<i>There was not a direct equivalent</i>

- 3.10 Within each principle there are still a series of sub-principles. The updated framework still advocates a self-assessment against each of the sub-principles.
- 3.11 As previously, it is recommended that the national framework is used as the basis for measuring the Council's governance arrangements. Therefore, a self-assessment has been undertaken and this is detailed in **Appendix 1**.
- 3.12 The template sets out each core principle and details the degree to which, on the evidence base, the Council meets each of the sub-principles. As previously, a score from 1 to 5 has been allocated, where a score of 5 demonstrates strong compliance.

The Council's Assessment

- 3.13 Previously, the Council has been able to demonstrate that it has a sound and robust system of corporate governance in place. Compared against the updated framework, this continues to be the case in many instances with a score of 5 prevalent in many areas. The scores are summarised in the following table.

Total number of sub-principles assessed	21
Total number scoring 5	16
Total number scoring 4	5

- 3.14 Overall, it is considered that there are no material weaknesses in the Council's governance arrangements when assessed against the new framework. The areas scoring 4 are where it is considered additional work is or can be undertaken to provide additional evidence and to further strengthen the Council's arrangements. These are detailed in the following table.

Sub-Principle	Action	Time
Defining outcomes	The Corporate Action Plan for 2016/17 includes a project to review key priorities into which available funds may be invested further in communities.	February 2017
Optimising the achievement of intended outcomes	This revised Governance Framework has highlighted that the Council needs to demonstrate more explicitly that the principle of social value is embedded in the delivery of its intended outcomes.	March 2017
Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals	The Council currently achieves the necessary qualifications for the nationally recognised Investors in People Standard. It is planned to test the Council's performance in the management and development of its workforce against a new national standard during 2017/18.	2017/18 – date to be confirmed
Managing data	Although it is considered that the Council is well placed in managing data, the Council does not currently have a dedicated Information Governance Officer. The Council, through the Audit Partnership, is buying-in resources to undertake an information governance review and to provide an on-going service.	July 2017

Implementing good practice in transparency	The Council's website is currently being upgraded. A key aim is to completely refresh information on the website and make it easier for the public and other stakeholders to better understand the Council's services and activities.	January 2017
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Progress on actions in the Annual Governance Statement 2015/16

3.15 The approved work plan included the following items:

- To review the Local Code of Corporate Governance in accordance with the updated national framework.
- An independent review of the Council's policies regarding information governance and compliance. This follows a report that was considered and approved by the Finance and Management Committee in December 2015 to strengthen the Council's framework.
- A review of mandatory training courses. This follows an internal audit report in April 2016 regarding governance, which made some recommendations to ensure relevance and consistency of approach.
- A review of ICT disaster recovery procedures. This follows an independent report into the Council's procedures in April 2016 which highlighted further process maps and documentation to be drawn up in the event of a disaster.
- A review of access to information regulations and committee work programme. These have not been reviewed for several years and may require updating.
- Development of service continuity plans for inclusion in the Council's Business Continuity Plan. This is the final action required from the audit of the Council's arrangements in 2014/15.

3.16 Detailed progress is shown in **Appendix 2**.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 None

5.0 Corporate Implications

5.1 The Local code applies to all of the Council's services and activities.

6.0 Community Implications

- 6.1 A key outcome in the Council's Corporate Plan is "ensuring good governance". Adopting a local code is a definitive way of demonstrating that the Council is aspiring to this principle.

7.0 Background Papers

- 7.1 Delivering Good Governance in Local Government; Framework and Guidance Notes 2016 Edition. (*Published by CIPFA and SOLACE*).

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

Framework Description: “Local Government organisations are accountable not only for how much they spend but also for how they use the resources under their stewardship. This includes accountability for outputs, both positive and negative and for the outcomes they have achieved. In addition, they have an overarching responsibility to serve the public interest in adhering to the requirements of legislation and government policies. It is essential that, as a whole, they can demonstrate the appropriateness of all their actions across all activities and have mechanisms in place to encourage and enforce adherence to ethical values and to respect the rule of law.”

Sub Principle	Evidence Base to Demonstrate Compliance	Self-Assessment Score (out of 5)	Actions to Strengthen Compliance
Behaving with integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are established Member and Officer Codes of Conduct which are detailed in the Council’s Constitution. • Members and Officers sign-up to the Codes when appointed. • Standards and behavior expected are part of the induction processes. • Standards and behavior are part of the PDR process for Officers and are included in the job competency framework. • There is an established process for Members to declare any interests at Committee meetings and these are recorded in official Minutes. • There is an established procedure governing conduct at Committee meetings, including the use of social media. • The Council has an established Standards Committee with independent persons appointed. • There are anti-fraud and corruption policies in place which are regularly reviewed and audited. • There are registers of interests for Members and Officers which are maintained and regularly reviewed. The Codes of Conduct refer Officers and Members to declare any interests. • There is a procedure for declaring gifts and hospitality and these declarations are registered with and held centrally by the Monitoring Officer. • The Council has an established Whistleblowing Policy which protects individuals and is communicated to all stakeholders, including contractors. • An established Complaints Procedure which includes provision for raising issues regarding standards and the behavior of Officers. • This Procedure makes provision to identify improvements and changes to procedures if required; these are reported to the Council. 	5	

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<p>Demonstrating a strong commitment to ethical values</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's Ethical Framework is set out in its Constitution. Specific references are detailed below. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Code of Conduct for both Members and Officers sets out the standards of conduct that Members are required to adhere to. ➤ The Protocol for Member and Officer relations defines respective roles and stresses the principles of mutual courtesy and respect. ➤ The Planning Code of Good Practice is designed to assist and protect Members involved in the planning process. ➤ The ICT Protocol is designed to assist and protect Members when using computer equipment and social media. ➤ The Licensing Protocol sets out procedures so that Members act in a fair and proper manner and are seen to do so. ➤ The Code of Conduct for Representation on Outside Bodies provides support and guidance to Members when representing the Council on funded bodies and partnerships. ➤ Ethical values are an element of the Council's Procurement framework and feature in the tendering/contract process. 	<p>5</p>	
<p>Respecting the rule of law</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of the Monitoring Officer and associated Protocol is designed to ensure that the Council operates within the law. • The Council complies with the national Statement on the "<i>Role of the Chief Financial Officer</i>" to ensure that the Council uses and accounts for its resources in accordance with legislation. • All Council Committees operate under a Terms of Reference. • An established Scheme of Delegation from Full Council to Committees and to Senior Officers is in place. • All Committees are supported by Committee Clerks. • The Monitoring Officer attends all meetings of Full Council. • New policies and operational developments/changes are only considered at Committee following consultation and analysis by the Chief Finance Officer, Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Head of HR. 	<p>5</p>	

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Core Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Framework Description: “Local Government is run for the public good; organisations therefore should ensure openness in their activities. Clear, trusted channels of communication and consultation should be used to engage effectively with all groups of stakeholders, such as individual citizens and service users, as well as institutional stakeholders. “

Sub Principle	Evidence Base to Demonstrate Compliance	Self-Assessment Score (out of 5)	Actions to Strengthen Compliance
Openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An established Freedom of Information Publication Scheme is in place which informs how and where information is available. • The Corporate Plan and Annual Report set out what the Council wants to achieve and how it has performed. • The Council adheres to the Government’s Transparency Code of Practice and publishes information accordingly. • Records of decisions at Committee meetings are published. • Committee reports are published in a standard form. • Committee reports include financial, legal and HR implications where required, together with an assessment of the Corporate and Community implications of proposals. • The Council adheres to a Committee timetable which is reported and approved ahead of every Civic Year; dates of meetings are publicised in advance. • A Committee work programme is updated and reviewed at each Committee which publishes forthcoming business and reports. • Committee agendas are published 5 working days prior to a meeting in accordance with the Access to Information Regulations. • All meetings are open to the press, media and public and each Agenda allows questions to be raised by the Public. 	5	
Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has an established Communications Strategy with an annual action plan subject to quarterly review. • The Council engages the support of other agencies and the voluntary sector to undertake consultations as appropriate. • Where the Council works in Partnership, protocols and procedures allow for views to be shared and challenge to take place. 	5	
Engaging with individual citizens and service users effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An SLA is in place with the local CVS to undertake consultation on potential changes affecting specific groups. • The Council regularly consults with council house tenants and users of sport and leisure facilities through established groups. • Results of public consultation are reported to the Council and included as part of any new proposals or changes to service provision. 	5	

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

Framework Description: “The long-term nature and impact of many of local government’s responsibilities mean that it should be sustainable. Decisions should further the organisation’s purpose, contribute to intended benefits and outcomes and remain within the limits of authority and resources. Input from all groups of stakeholders, including citizens, service users and institutional stakeholders is vital to the success of this process and in balancing competing demands when determining priorities for the finite resources available. “

Sub Principle	Evidence Base to Demonstrate Compliance	Self-Assessment Score (out of 5)	Actions to Strengthen Compliance
Defining outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has an established vision of “<i>Making South Derbyshire a better place to live, work and visit</i>”. This is supported by 3 priorities of People, Place and Progress. • This vision and the priorities are central to the Corporate Plan which is set for a 5-year period. • The achievement of the priorities is measured in terms of a set of performance indicators for defined outcomes. • The Corporate Plan is published and advertised extensively both internally and externally. • It is approved and adopted by Full Council. • Operational targets are cascaded down into Service Plans. • The Council’s Performance Management Framework monitors and reviews performance against the priorities; this includes comparisons and trends which are reported quarterly. • Identified risks to the achievement of defined outcomes are integral to this process. Risk registers are reviewed on a quarterly basis. • The Corporate Plan also aligns to the Sustainable Community Strategy for the District. 	4	<p>The Corporate Action Plan for 2016/17 includes a project to review key priorities into which available funds may be invested further in communities.</p> <p>This work will form part of the 2017/18 Budget Round.</p>
Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The allocation of resources is subject to a Service and Financial Planning process which evaluates proposals in accordance with the Corporate Plan and takes into account risk and sustainability. • The Council’s Capital Programme focuses resources on long-term benefits with investment in new housing, new leisure facilities, sustainable infrastructure and the purchase of land to secure investment and future service provision. • Key plans and strategies such as the Corporate Plan, Housing Business Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan, focus on a period that overlaps each 4-year democratic term. • Current financial constraints are factored into strategic plans for Housing, Economic and Environmental Services. • A corporate Equalities Working Group ensures that there is fair access to all services and this is demonstrated in an Annual Report. 	5	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Communications Strategy sets out guidelines on how and when stakeholders are engaged. 		
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Core Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

Framework Description: *“Local government achieves its intended outcomes by providing a mixture of legal, regulatory and practical interventions (courses of action). Determining the right mix of these courses of action is a critically important strategic choice that local government has to make to ensure intended outcomes are achieved. They need robust decision-making mechanisms to ensure that their defined outcomes can be achieved in a way that provides the best trade-off between the various types of resource inputs while still enabling effective and efficient operations. Decisions made need to be reviewed frequently to ensure that achievement of outcomes is optimised.”*

Sub Principle	Evidence Base to Demonstrate Compliance	Self-Assessment Score (out of 5)	Actions to Strengthen Compliance
Determining interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Service and Financial Planning framework is effectively an options appraisal which includes an analysis of risk and opportunities together with short and long term resourcing implications. All major procurements are subject to a prior options appraisal which is recorded and signed off corporately; this includes soft market testing where appropriate. Proposals are discussed at senior officer level, with senior Members and are then subject to the Committee process. Working groups are set up if necessary to review options, for example on the HRA Business Plan and future management of the Forestry Centre; this includes representative groups (tenants) and service users (sport facilities). Established consultation is undertaken with service users in housing, sport and health, etc. Consultation outcomes have helped to shape the design of facilities, for example, local skate parks. 	5	
Planning interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established quarterly performance and budget monitoring reports with key indicators which report performance results and highlight corrective action where necessary. Annual budgets are based on current and future service provision and in accordance with the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The key aim of the Financial Strategy is sustainability and the MTFP factors in potential funding constraints in which services plan accordingly. 	5	

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Optimising achievement of intended outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MTFP integrates and balances service priorities, affordability and external pressures. This is analysed in the comprehensive service and budget reports during the Annual Budget Round and ½ yearly reviews. Service planning and the procurement framework consider “social value” and this is a part of the evaluation in procurement exercises to encourage local employment and apprenticeship schemes, etc. Work is commissioned in partnership with the local voluntary sector (for example CVS) to optimise the social and environmental well-being of local residents and to help all groups access services. 	5	
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Core Principle E: Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

Framework Description: *“Local government needs appropriate structures and leadership, as well as people with the right skills, appropriate qualifications and mind-set, to operate efficiently and effectively and achieve intended outcomes within the specified periods. A local government organisation must ensure that it has both the capacity to fulfill its own mandate and to make certain that there are policies in place to guarantee that its management has the operational capacity for the organisation as a whole. Because both individuals and the environment in which an organisation operates will change over time, there will be a continuous need to develop capacity as well as the skills and experience of individual staff members. Leadership in local government is strengthened by the participation of people with many different types of backgrounds, reflecting the structure and diversity of communities.”*

Sub Principle	Evidence Base to Demonstrate Compliance	Self-Assessment Score (out of 5)	Actions to Strengthen Compliance
Developing the entity’s capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council regularly uses comparative data through benchmarking and soft market testing to determine how resources are used and allocated and to inform future service provision, for example ICT (September 2016) and the HRA New Build programme. The Council uses representative groups, for example council house tenants and leisure centre users, to help formulate service provision. The Council actively works in partnership where this is deemed to be beneficial to achieving its desired outcomes with added value, for example the management of leisure facilities and investment in corporate services. The Council has several partnership/collaborative working arrangements. An established Workforce Strategy is in place which includes an annual work plan setting out training and development activities. An established training programme is in place to develop senior 	4	<p>It is considered that the Council is extremely well placed in this regard.</p> <p>The guidelines recommend that organisations should be subject to an external peer review from time-to-time. This will be considered in 2017/18.</p>

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	<p>and aspiring managers, which is delivered by external facilitators; this is aligned to corporate priorities and factors in external factors such as limiting resources.</p>		
<p>Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular meetings take place between senior managers and leading Members to ensure regular and effective communication. • Article 12 of the Constitution sets out the principles of Decision Making with Section 21 detailing the Scheme of Delegation; these are designed to ensure that the responsibility for decision making is clear and rests at the right place in the Council. • The Council also operates within a set of Financial Regulations and Procedural Rules. • A weekly meeting takes place between the Leader and Chief Executive to ensure a continuing and effective relationship. • Members undertake statutory training on Licensing, Planning and Finance in order to keep updated on developments and legislative changes in key areas of service delivery. • Members have access to training and seminars through the District Council's Network and the East Midlands Regional Council. • Development plans for Officers are linked to a competency framework and where appropriate to the leadership programme. • The Council employs external support for key specialist tasks and to relieve pressure on capacity, for example, to implement job evaluation, ICT Strategy and assessment of housing options. • The Council works with other authorities to deliver services to benefit from economies of scale, for example, the provision of internal audit, building control and fraud prevention. • All employees, including the CEO and Directors are subject to annual appraisals. • Certain training courses are mandatory for specific groups of employees or for all Officers, regarding health and safety, equality and absence management, etc. • HR policies are designed to assist and guide Officers and further their well-being to ensure that they act in the correct manner, are safe and have access to appropriate benefits. These policies are regularly reviewed in consultation with employee representatives. 	<p>4</p>	<p>The Council currently achieves the necessary qualifications for the nationally recognised Investors in People Standard.</p> <p>It is planned to test the Council's performance in the management and development of its workforce against a new national standard during 2017/18.</p>

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

Framework Description: *“Local government needs to ensure that the organisation and governance structures that it oversees have been implemented and can sustain an effective performance management system that facilitates effective and efficient delivery of planned services. Risk management and internal control are important and integral parts of a performance management system and are crucial to the achievement of outcomes. Risk should be considered and addressed as part of all decision making activities.*

A strong system of financial management is essential for the implementation of policies and the achievement of intended outcomes, as it will enforce financial discipline, strategic allocation of resources, efficient service delivery and accountability.

It is also essential that a culture and structure for scrutiny are in place as a key part of accountable decision making, policy making and review. A positive working culture that accepts, promotes and encourages constructive challenge is critical to successful scrutiny and successful service delivery. Importantly, this culture does not happen automatically, it requires repeated public commitment from those in authority.”

Sub Principle	Evidence Base to Demonstrate Compliance	Self-Assessment Score (out of 5)	Actions to Strengthen Compliance
Managing risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has an established risk management framework in place. This is reviewed regularly and was updated in 2016 against the new Corporate Plan. The framework is also subject to Audit from time-to-time. • Responsibility for managing risks is assigned to service managers in Service Plans. Strategic risks are owned by the Corporate Management Team. These risks are regularly reviewed and reported quarterly. 	5	
Managing performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has an established performance framework with comprehensive performance reports considered by policy committees on a quarterly basis. • All key activities in the Corporate Plan are subject to performance measures which assesses progress against intended outcomes. • Consultation takes place between Members and Officers in the planning process to establish what and the format that information is required for decision making. • The Council has an established Overview and Scrutiny function in place, including a separate Committee whose Chair does not sit on any other policy committees. • This Committee operates under a terms of reference set out in the Constitution and sets its own work programme. It focuses on a 	5	

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	<p>balance of internal and external issues and reports to Council, in an annual report, its outcomes for the year and where it has added value.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's outcomes in terms of finance are reported from base budget stage through to the publication of the annual financial statements. 		
<p>Robust internal control</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has an established Audit Committee. • The Committee has its own specific terms of reference around ensuring good governance, internal control and risk management. • The effectiveness of the Committee is regularly reviewed and Members receive training and briefings. • The Committee oversees an annual Internal Audit Plan which covers all fundamental systems on a yearly basis and all Council services/activities over a 3 year rolling period based on risk. • Internal Audit reports quarterly on its audits, the outcomes and ranks the control status from limited to comprehensive assurance. Any potential implications for the Council's Governance Statement are highlighted at that stage. • An established counter fraud and anti-corruption framework is in place and the Council works in partnership with other councils to prevent and detect fraud; this includes sharing systems. • The Council reports its Governance Framework and its effectiveness are assessed through an Annual Governance Statement which is reported in the Financial Statements. • The provision of Internal Audit is through an established partnership arrangement with other authorities; this ensures that the Council benefits from economies of scale and additional expertise in its audit coverage. • Internal Audit meets the requirements of the nationally recognised Public Sector Auditing Standards. 	<p>5</p>	
<p>Managing data</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has an established Data Quality framework in place which is subject to annual review and audit. • Methodology statements are established for each key performance indicator in the Corporate Plan; these ensure that there are proper procedures to ensure that the data collected and reported is correct, reliable and accurately measures progress on intended outcomes. • The Council's Director of Finance and Corporate Services is the designated Data Protection Officer. • The Council has established policies regarding the security of data, and data protection, etc. • Arrangements for managing and storing data are subject to audit. 	<p>4</p>	<p>Although it is considered that the Council is well placed in managing data, the Council does not currently have a dedicated Information Governance Officer. The Council, through the Audit Partnership, is buying-in resources to undertake an information governance review and to provide an on-going service.</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information asset owners assigned to most data folders and systems. • The Council only shares data with other agencies after a proper data sharing protocol has been established. These currently exist with the DWP, the Police and Fire authorities • From time-to-time, other agreements are established with for example, credit rating agencies for specifically defined purposes. • Where high volumes of data are processed, the Council undertakes independent quality checking, for example in the processing of housing benefits. 		
<p>Strong public financial management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) aims to maintain resources over the longer-term to deliver services and factors in potential changes in service provision. • The MTFP is underpinned by a Financial Strategy which sets out procedures for the proper stewardship of public money, together with safeguarding the sustainability of the Council's financial position. • The Strategy sets out the overriding financial target that defines a minimum level of General Reserves over a rolling 5-year period (10 years for the HRA). • Quarterly budget and financial monitoring reports to the Council assess progress against annual budgets and also keep under review any current issues and their potential impact on the longer-term financial position. 	<p>5</p>	

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

Framework Description: “Accountability is about ensuring that those making decisions and delivering services are answerable for them. Effective accountability is concerned not only with reporting on actions completed, but also ensuring that stakeholders are able to understand and respond as the organisation plans and carries out its activities in a transparent manner. Both external and internal audit contribute to effective accountability.”

Sub Principle	Evidence Base to Demonstrate Compliance	Self-Assessment Score (out of 5)	Actions to Strengthen Compliance
Implementing good practice in transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council publishes its successes and answers any issues through a series of media releases; these are designed to explain matters in a more easily understandable, but factual way, and summarises decisions made following consideration of technical Committee reports. • The Council publishes an Annual Report which helps to explain what the Council does, its achievements, etc. in a more easily understandable style. • The Council’s website is also a means of publishing information in an informative way. • Social media is also being used as a tool for engaging with residents and other stakeholders. 	4	The Council’s website is currently being upgraded. A key aim is to completely refresh information on the website and make it easier for the public and stakeholders to better understand the Council’s services and activities.
Implementing good practice in reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In accordance with statutory requirements, the Council publishes Audited Accounts and Financial Statements, together with an Annual Governance Statement. These are considered and approved by the Council and then published in accordance with a statutory timescale. 	5	
Assurance and effective accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All key indicators and projects in the Corporate Plan have a named responsible officer. These are mainly Directors and individual service managers. • These responsible officers are accountable to the relevant Policy Committee. • Any recommendations made by External Audit in their annual report, are assigned a responsible Council Officer and actions are monitored by the appropriate Committee. • Recommendations made by Internal Audit are designed to strengthen the Council’s internal control environment. • Recommendations made by Internal Audit are also assigned a responsible Council Officer to implement agreed actions. • Internal Audit provides quarterly updates on outstanding 	5	

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	recommendations and there have been instances where the Audit Committee has requested specific reports from responsible officers where agreed actions are still to be implemented.		
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APPENDIX 2: ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2015/16 – PROGRESS ON WORK PLAN

Work Area	Timescale	Responsible Officer (s)	Governance / Corporate Plan Priority	Action and Outcome
Continue to review the Local Code of Corporate Governance and to monitor the Governance Work Plan for the year	½ yearly review	Legal and Democratic Services Manager	This is the overall framework that monitors the priority outcomes for the Corporate Plan	Completed as detailed in this report.
Information Governance	March 2017	Director of Finance and Corporate Services	To ensure that the Council complies with data protection principles and safeguards the data that it manages	To be completed later in the year. Resources are in place and work has commenced.
Employee Training	September 2016	Director of Community and Planning Services	To ensure employees are up to date and aware of statutory duties and corporate matters in undertaking their roles	Completed. Mandatory training has been approved by the Corporate Management Team in conjunction with HR and a training programme set out. Attendance to be monitored.
ICT Disaster Recovery Procedures	July 2016	Director of Finance and Corporate Services	To ensure that the Council has fully documented processes for ICT in the event of a business continuity issue	Completed. Full documentation in place and awaiting audit check.
Access to Information Regulations and Work Programme	June and November 2016	Legal and Democratic Services Manager	To ensure that the Council complies with freedom of information requirements and is open and transparent in its reporting	Forward work programme now in place for all policy committees (completed June 2016). The Access to Information Regulations still to be reviewed.

APPENDIX 2: ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2015/16 – PROGRESS ON WORK PLAN

Business Continuity	October 2016	Director of Finance and Corporate Services	To ensure that sufficient information is available at Directorate level to enable individual services to react to business continuity issues	Completed. Action signed off by the Resilience liaison Forum on 23 rd November 2016.
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