

Central  
Bedfordshire  
Council  
Priory House  
Monks Walk  
Chicksands,  
Shefford SG17 5TQ



**TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE**

22 June 2017

Dear Councillor

**AUDIT COMMITTEE – THURSDAY, 29 JUNE 2017**

Further to the agenda and papers for the above meeting, previously circulated, please find attached the following report:

**9. Annual Governance Statement 2016/17**

To consider the draft Annual Governance Statement for 2016/17.

Should you have any queries regarding the above please contact me.

Yours sincerely

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**Central Bedfordshire Council**

**AUDIT COMMITTEE**

29 JUNE 2017

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**Annual Governance Statement 2016/17**

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**Purpose of this report**

1. The report seeks the Committee's approval to the draft Annual Governance Statement.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee is asked to:

- i. Approve the draft Annual Governance Statement attached as Appendix A.

**Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations**

2. The Audit Committee is responsible for overseeing the production of the Annual Governance Statement and therefore this matter has not been considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committees.

**Background**

3. The Audit Committee's terms of reference include responsibility for overseeing the production of the Council's Annual Governance Statement.
4. The Annual Governance Statement adopts a new format in line with new guidance issued by CIPFA/Solace in 2016, "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework".
5. The Annual Governance Statement, should be read in conjunction with the Local Code of Corporate Governance (attached at Appendix B). The updated Local Code of Corporate Governance, effective for the 2016/17 financial year, was approved by the Audit Committee on 3 April 2017. It details the 7 core Principles upon which the Council's governance framework is based and describes corporate governance as comprising the arrangements (including political, economic, social,

environmental, administrative, legal and other arrangements) put in place to ensure that the intended outcomes for stakeholders are defined and achieved.

6. The Annual Governance Statement and the Code of Corporate Governance together show how the Council has complied with the Code in the 2016/17 financial year, how the Council has monitored the effectiveness of its governance arrangements during the year, any planned changes and also identifies any areas of significant risk or governance issues in the financial year.
7. The draft Annual Governance Statement has been considered by the Corporate Management Team. The significant governance issues that the Council has had to manage during 2016/17 are referred to in section 5 of the Statement.
8. The Audit Committee is asked to consider whether the draft Annual Governance Statement accurately reflects the governance arrangements and the management of risk.

#### **Council Priorities**

9. A sound system of corporate governance provides the framework and assurance within which the Council can deliver its priorities with confidence. Sound governance arrangements contribute to the achievement of all the Council's priorities.

#### **Corporate Implications**

##### **Risk Management**

10. The Annual Governance Statement identifies a number of significant governance issues and, where appropriate, these have been identified in the Council's Corporate Risk Register, together with mitigating action to reduce the level of the risk.

##### **Staffing (including Trades Unions)**

11. There are none.

##### **Legal Implications**

12. The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require the Council to conduct an annual review of its systems of internal control. The preparation of an Annual Governance Statement forms part of that process.

### **Financial Implications**

13. The Annual Governance Statement will be reported alongside the Council's Statement of Accounts for 2016/17, but this report has no financial implications.

### **Equalities Implications**

14. None arising directly from this report.

### **Conclusion and next Steps**

15. If approved by the Audit Committee, the Statement will be submitted to the Leader and Chief Executive for formal sign off.

### **Appendices**

The following Appendices are attached:

Appendix A – Draft Annual Governance Statement

Appendix B – Code of Corporate Governance

### **Background Papers:**

None

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## **CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2016/17**

#### **1.0 SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY**

Central Bedfordshire Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvements in the way in which its functions are exercised having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, including arrangements for the management of risk.

Central Bedfordshire Council has adopted a Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*. A copy of this code is on our website [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk).

This statement explains how the Council has complied with national good practice guidance and meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 in relation to the publication of a statement on internal control.

#### **2.0 THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK**

##### **2.1 The purpose of the governance framework**

The governance framework is made up of the systems, processes, culture and values by which the authority directs and controls its activities and through which it engages with and leads the community. The framework enables the authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic priorities and to consider whether those priorities have led to the delivery of appropriate services and value for money. The governance framework is described in the Code of Corporate Governance.

The system of internal control is a significant part of the corporate framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It 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 system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised, the impact should they be realised and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The governance framework has been in place at Central Bedfordshire Council for the year ended 31 March 2017 and up to the date of the approval of the statement of accounts.

This section of the Annual Governance Statement describes the key elements of the systems and processes that make up the authority's governance arrangements.

## **2.2 The Governance Framework**

The Council's governance framework contributes to the delivery of the Council's vision and values and the key elements of the processes and systems that comprise the framework are as follows:

- Strategic leadership provided by Members including the development and review of the Council's visions, priorities and values. These detail the Council's vision of its purpose and intended outcomes for residents and service users to all;
- Key policies are defined in the "Policy Framework" within the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules in the Council's Constitution. This framework is reviewed periodically to ensure it remains fit for purpose strategically and that it is aligned to corporate priorities;
- Business planning processes which ensure that services are delivered in line with the Council's vision and values and representing the best use of all Council resources;
- Measuring performance and achievement of objectives through the mechanism of the Council's performance management system;
- A written Constitution specifying the roles and responsibilities of elected Members and Officers with protocols for effective communication;
- The Council has adopted arrangements to promote high standards of ethical governance and includes Codes of Conduct defining the standards of behaviour for both Members and Officers and a Member/Officer Protocol as part of the Constitution. Further guidance is provided in the Council's Ethical Handbook;
- The Schemes of Delegation to Members and Officers within the Constitution sets out the principles, processes and controls for decision makers. Codes

- of Financial and Procurement Governance set out the constraints within which Officers may work and these Codes are supported by more detailed procedure rules;
- Embedded internal systems to ensure Members are presented with the appropriate information to make decisions, including corporate implications with advice on legal, risk management and financial considerations. Member level decisions are based on reports and are recorded;
  - An Audit Committee to provide independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment, independent scrutiny of the Authority's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the Authority's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment, and to oversee the financial reporting process;
  - Statutory Officers to support and monitor the Council's governance arrangements, ensure compliance with relevant laws and regulations, internal policies and procedures and that expenditure is lawful;
  - Policies for confidential reporting (whistleblowing) and an Anti-Fraud Strategy are in place to support the governance within the Council. There is a corporate complaints process with separate procedures for Children's Services and Adult Social Care where complaints procedures are governed by Regulations. There are also formal processes for registering complaints in respect of the Council's Housing Landlord functions and for receiving, evaluating and investigating complaints against Members;
  - A consultation strategy to ensure the Council consults with and engages the diverse communities of Central Bedfordshire, allowing them to input to the planning of services provided for them and the review of those services as appropriate;
  - A system of Overview and Scrutiny Committees with responsibility for key areas and who receive reports on keys issues including budget monitoring, performance and efficiency information and provides independent checks and balances on the exercise of functions and responsibilities by the Council.

### **3.0 REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS**

Central Bedfordshire Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the Corporate Management Team, which has responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Head of Internal Audit's annual report, and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

The Council continues to assess how its overall corporate governance responsibilities are discharged.

The Council's review of the Governance Framework and the effectiveness of the system of internal control comprise:

- Reviews of the Governance Framework and internal control in accordance with CIPFA Guidance carried out by Internal Audit on an annual basis, including consideration of the Council's financial management arrangements conforming with the CIPFA statements on the role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government and the role of the Chief Internal Auditor in Public Service Organisations; In early 2017 a complete review and redraft of the Council's Code of Corporate Governance by Internal Audit and the Monitoring Officer to reflect new guidance issued by CIPFA/Solace in 2016, "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework";
- Annual report and opinion on the Internal Control environment prepared by the Head of Internal Audit and Risk<sup>1</sup>. This report draws on the outcome of audit reviews undertaken throughout 2016/17 and is informed by the comments of external auditors and inspectors. The report is designed to provide assurance on the effectiveness of internal controls;
- The completion of self-assurance statements by directors;
- the work undertaken by the external auditor reported in their annual audit and inspection letter.
- other work undertaken by independent inspection bodies.

### **(1) Central Bedfordshire Council's Vision**

The Council's overall objective is to create Central Bedfordshire as a "great place to live and work" and the Council's medium term plan identifies the following priorities:

- Enhancing Central Bedfordshire.
- Great residence services.
- Improving education and skills.
- Protecting the vulnerable and improving wellbeing.
- Creating stronger communities.
- An efficient and responsive Council.

The Council's Budget and Policy Framework contains specific plans, policies and strategies driving delivery of the Council's priorities and key work programmes.

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<sup>1</sup> The role of Chief Internal Auditor within Central Bedfordshire Council is undertaken by the Head of Internal Audit and Risk

The Council has adopted a set of organisational values that describe the type of organisation we want to be and the principles that will guide us in achieving our priorities and vision. These set out the way the Council will work and interact with its customers, members and staff.

The Council's values are:

**Respect and Empowerment**

- we will treat people as individuals who matter to us.

**Stewardship and Efficiencies**

- we will make the best use of the resources available to us.

**Results Focused**

- we will focus on the outcomes that make a difference to people's lives, and

**Collaborative**

- we will work closely with our colleagues, partners and customers to deliver on these outcomes.

**(2) Service Quality**

The Council has used regular performance reporting to ensure a sustained focus on those things that matter most to local people.

At a strategic level, the Corporate Management Team (CMT) reviews reports on the performance of the Council on a monthly basis. CMT also reviews the MTP progress or status report on a quarterly basis. This report is presented to the Executive with any specific issues addressed through the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

At an operational level performance data is populated on the Council's performance system by relevant Directorates. Directors have responsibility for ensuring that relevant data and commentaries are published on the system. Directorate Management Teams also regularly considered their key performance data, with associated commentary provided by Assistant Directors and/or Heads of Service as appropriate.

The Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer also met on a regular basis as statutory officers to consider and address any corporate issues or matters of probity that may benefit from their collective input and approach.

### **(3) Key Roles and Responsibilities**

The Council's Constitution sets out how the Council operates and sets out clearly what matters are reserved to full Council and those powers which have been delegated to committees and officers, Executive and Members.

Whilst the key roles and responsibilities will not change the format of the Constitution has been reviewed by the Monitoring Officer to group relevant and similar matters. The review will shortly be finalised.

### **(4) Codes of Conduct and standards of behaviour of Officers and Members**

Central Bedfordshire Council continues to promote high standards of ethical governance. Complaints about the Council's Members is regularly reviewed via the performance reports to CMT and bi-annually at General Purposes Committee which has responsibility for overseeing the arrangements for the Code of Conduct.

The Council's Ethical Handbook contains additional Codes relating to Gifts and Hospitality, Planning and Licensing Good Practice, Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing) and guidance for Members on Property and Transactions and Commercial Property Management.

### **(5) Decisions, processes and controls**

The Scheme of Delegation within the Constitution sets out the powers delegated to various Officers as well as the limits, processes and controls for those powers.

The Code of Financial Governance sets out the limits within which officers may make decisions on spending, within the budget approved by the Council. The Code is supported by detailed procedure rules which are maintained on the Council's intranet.

The Code of Procurement Governance defines the procurement process and references the relevant levels of authority dependant upon financial thresholds. The Code is supported by detailed procedure rules which are maintained on the Council's intranet. The rules are promoted to staff through bespoke training courses. They are also embedded in a Procurement Tool Kit which is made available to all members of staff who are involved in procurement, and is available as an interactive version on the Intranet. A two page pictorial summary of the rules is also made available.

The Council's Risk Management Strategy and Policy Statement was updated and approved by the Audit Committee in January 2016. The Strategic Risk register has been regularly reviewed and refreshed during the year. CMT endorsed the Risk

Management Strategy and Policy Statement and have received regular risk reports during the year, which have also been presented to the Audit Committee. Committee reports require officers to set out the risk management considerations in terms of current and potential risks and how they will be managed and mitigated.

### **(6) Audit Committee**

The Audit Committee provides independent assurance of the adequacy of the Council's control environment and oversees the financial reporting process.

The Audit Committee met regularly during 2016/17, considering reports, including the annual Internal Audit Report from the Chief Internal Auditor, the Council's Senior Finance Officers and the External Auditor as well as other officers as and when appropriate. The Chair of the Audit Committee presents an annual report to Council detailing the work of the Committee in the preceding year.

### **(7) Compliance with relevant laws and regulations**

The Council continues to have access to a team of professional legal staff with specialist knowledge of its functions via LGSS Law Ltd, a firm wholly owned by the Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and Northamptonshire County Council. LGSS Law Ltd have advised on relevant laws, regulations and constitutional issues to ensure that the Council acts lawfully.

All reports considered by the Executive, the Council's regulatory committees and by Overview and Scrutiny Committees include advice on the legal implications and risks of the proposed decisions. These reports are reviewed by a senior legal adviser to ensure that the legal implications have been accurately reflected.

The Monitoring Officer or, as appropriate, a senior lawyer attends meetings of the Council, the Executive and regulatory committees to advise on legal issues as they arise.

### **(8) Whistle-blowing and complaints**

The Confidential Reporting Policy was reviewed and updated in 2016/17 to reflect changes to roles and responsibilities. The Anti-Fraud Strategy was due to be reviewed during 2016/17 however the target date has been extended to December 17.

The Council welcomes feedback and has a three stage complaints process for customers with separate statutory procedures for Children's Services and Adult Social Care.

### **(9) Development and Training for Officers and Members**

We have offered a range of Learning and Development opportunities with a focus on providing a wealth of on-demand resources (e-learning, webinars, e-books etc) linked to the Corporate Vision, Values and Priorities. These are designed to provide individuals with the skills to do their job and to support them and the organisation in meeting their objectives and statutory requirements in the context of the Council and local government.

The Member Development Programme has supported all Members and has provided essential updates and training sessions.

### **(10) Channels of Communication**

Central Bedfordshire Council has continued to enhance its communication with the public, staff and other stakeholders during 2016/17. It has maintained presence on social media and continued to provide the quarterly community magazine, and weekly staff and Member bulletins.

The Council's website has been enhanced to ensure further engagement with the public and proactive media relations have also ensured that Council decision making and service developments are effectively reported to the media.

### **(11) Equality and Diversity**

The Council has continued to promote equality of opportunity and eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations during 2016/17. Equality Impact Assessments have been conducted for the development of relevant strategies, policies and services and the Council's Equality Forum have been available to quality assure any significant Council Strategies and Policies.

### **(12) Partnership governance**

The Council's Constitution includes a detailed Partnerships Protocol that sets out the arrangements and principles for established and future public and private sector partnerships.

The Protocol prescribes the key requirements to ensure accountability (internally amongst partners and externally to communities), value for money, leadership, decision-making, scrutiny and risk management.

All partnerships are required to have detailed terms of reference that fully set out all of the arrangements and key partnerships review these on an annual basis to ensure they are fit for purpose and aligned to the Partnership's future work

programme.

### **(13) Internal Audit**

The Internal Audit plan is prioritised by a combination of the key internal controls, assessment and review on the basis of risk and the Council's corporate governance arrangements, including risk management. All Internal Audit reports included an assessment of the adequacy of internal control and prioritised action plans to address any identified weaknesses. These were submitted to Members, Directors, Heads of Service and Head Teachers as appropriate.

The internal audit function is monitored and reviewed regularly by the Audit Committee. The Committee also reviews progress in implementing high risk recommendations made in audit reports.

A self assessment review is undertaken annually by the Head of Internal Audit and Risk against compliance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards 2013 on the effectiveness of the Internal Audit function. No issues of concern were raised as a result of these reviews. An independent external assessment was undertaken by CIPFA during 2016/17, and the Internal Audit Team is fully compliant with the Standards.

### **(14) Peer Review**

The Council has carried out a number of peer reviews during the year, the latest of which was an organisational wide review focusing on partnerships. Although carried out in May 2017, and therefore strictly part of the 2017/18 report, it is worth noting that a peer review took place, focussing in particular on:

1. Understanding of the local place and priority setting
2. Leadership of Place
3. Financial planning and viability
4. Organisational leadership and governance
5. Capacity to deliver

The draft findings will be included in next year's report but two of the conclusions were:

- Sound financial management which is well understood across the Council and has allowed us to avoid some of the more draconian service reductions that others have implemented.
- Strong partnership working in some contexts with a desire for even stronger collaboration specifically on Central Bedfordshire specific issues.

#### **4.0 ANNUAL AUDIT REPORT FOR 2016/17**

The Council's Head of Internal Audit submitted his opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's internal control environment to the Audit Committee on 29 June 2017. The Internal Audit work programme included reviews of the fundamental financial systems and other assurance work on other non fundamental systems.

The Head of Internal Audit reported that his opinion was that overall the Council's system of internal control, governance framework and risk management arrangements were adequate. In general, the key controls in place were adequate and effective such that reasonable assurance can be placed on the operation of the Council's functions.

Four of the fundamental system reviews received a Full Assurance audit opinion and a further four have received an opinion of Adequate Assurance, only Swift Financials received a Limited Opinion and it is expected that the all of the key issues will be resolved as part of the coming software replacement or upgrade project.

The majority of audit reviews of areas other than the fundamental systems have received Adequate Assurance opinions. Where weaknesses in the current processes have been identified actions have been agreed with management to address these issues and Internal Audit has continued to track the implementation of high priority recommendations throughout the year and report to the Audit Committee.

Last year's Governance statement highlighted issues with the ICT Disaster Recovery Plan. Since then ICT management is increasingly looking to cloud services where feasible, which in addition to functionality improvement for end users is considered to provide improved resilience and disaster recovery procedures. The Audit Committee received direct assurance from ICT management at the April 2017 meeting along with an updated Disaster Recovery Plan. A follow up Internal Audit is currently in progress.

#### **5.0 SIGNIFICANT GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

In previous Annual Governance Statements certain significant governance issues have been identified, together with the measures that the Council intends to take to manage the risks associated with these issues. Such issues are identified in the Council's Corporate Risk Register, which also identifies the mitigating action to be taken. The Risk Register is monitored regularly by CMT.

The following significant governance issues were identified during 2016/17:

- New EU Regulations relating to data protection will be effective as from May 2018 and this will require updating of processes and procedures to ensure compliance

Central Bedfordshire does continue to face significant future challenges arising from a significant reduction in Central Government funding. The Council has been prudent in its medium term financial plan and is pursuing a significant transformation programme throughout the organisation to ensure that modern, efficient and effective ways of working are in place to support all service provision whilst continuing to drive down costs and seek out appropriate opportunities. There is a particular focus across the Council on the digitisation of services to provide better customer access and enhance the customer experience. Staff and being enabled to work in an agile manner, from any location.

The Strategic Risk Register also identifies the following risks which have an impact on governance:

- Failure to deliver major transformation programme within Children's Services.
- Risk of failure to deliver community cohesion in the context of the demographic growth in Central Bedfordshire. Some settlements will experience considerable expansion and we need to manage potential resentment, secure equal access to facilities and enhance a sense of community.
- Fragility of Partners/Failure of Partners: Central Bedfordshire's vision cannot be delivered in isolation. All partners, including Police, Probation, Health, the Voluntary Community Sector, independent care providers and Town and Parish Councils are experiencing significant changes and pressures. These include budgetary pressures, transfer of responsibilities, geographical factors, confusing accountabilities, increasing complexities, fragility and volatility. There is an increased risk that services to our public will be compromised and that increased costs will fall on the Council.
- The political and economic uncertainty around potential changes in laws, regulations, government policy or funding arising from the UK leaving the European Union and other significant international events, which may impact on Council objectives.

- The capacity of the Council to deliver services in the light of the scale of the efficiencies we need to make, taking account of the increasing importance of our income from NNDR, the impact of changes to HRA financing and the anticipated transfer of new responsibilities to councils without the concomitant funding, such as the administration of attendance allowances.  
Also reflects the impacts of shifts in Government policy, for example, the impact of the move towards Academies.
- Failure to deliver the Organisational Development Plan.

Whilst these risks are identified and regularly monitored, this report shows that they are being addressed and mitigated wherever possible.

## 6.0 COMPLIANCE WITH CIPFA CODE OF PRACTICE ON MANAGING THE RISK OF FRAUD AND CORRUPTION

To help Councils recognise and address their fraud risks, CIPFA published a Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption in December 2014. This sets out five principles that organisations should adhere to:

- Acknowledge responsibility
- Identify risks
- Develop a Strategy
- Provide resources
- Take action

The Code includes a requirement for organisations to include a statement within their Annual Governance Statement about their adherence to this Code. A detailed review of the Council’s arrangements against the Code has been undertaken to address any gaps identified and action has been taken to address any issues identified. The Confidential Reporting Policy has been updated to support compliance with the Code. There is an annual report to the Audit Committee on the Council’s anti-fraud work.

Having considered all the principles, we are satisfied that, subject to the actions identified below, the organisation has adopted a response that is appropriate for its fraud and corruption risks and commits to maintain its vigilance to tackle fraud.

<b>Action:</b>	<b>Responsibility:</b>	<b>Target Date:</b>
To finalise the review of the Anti Fraud and Corruption Strategy to support compliance with	Chief Finance Officer	End December 2017

the Code.		
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**7.0 CONCLUSION**

This statement has been produced as a result of a review of the effectiveness of the governance framework in place during 2016/17 and has been approved by the Council's Audit Committee.

Overall, the arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework. The Council proposes to take steps over the coming year to address the above matters to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in the review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

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**J JAMIESON**  
**LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

**Dated**

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**R CARR**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**Dated**

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Appendix B

# **Local Code of Corporate Governance**

Effective from 2016/17



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## Code of Corporate Governance

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council's Code of Corporate Governance is based upon the CIPFA / SOLACE publication entitled "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework 2016 Edition." This supersedes the previous Code approved by the Audit Committee in April 2011.

### 2 What do we mean by Governance?

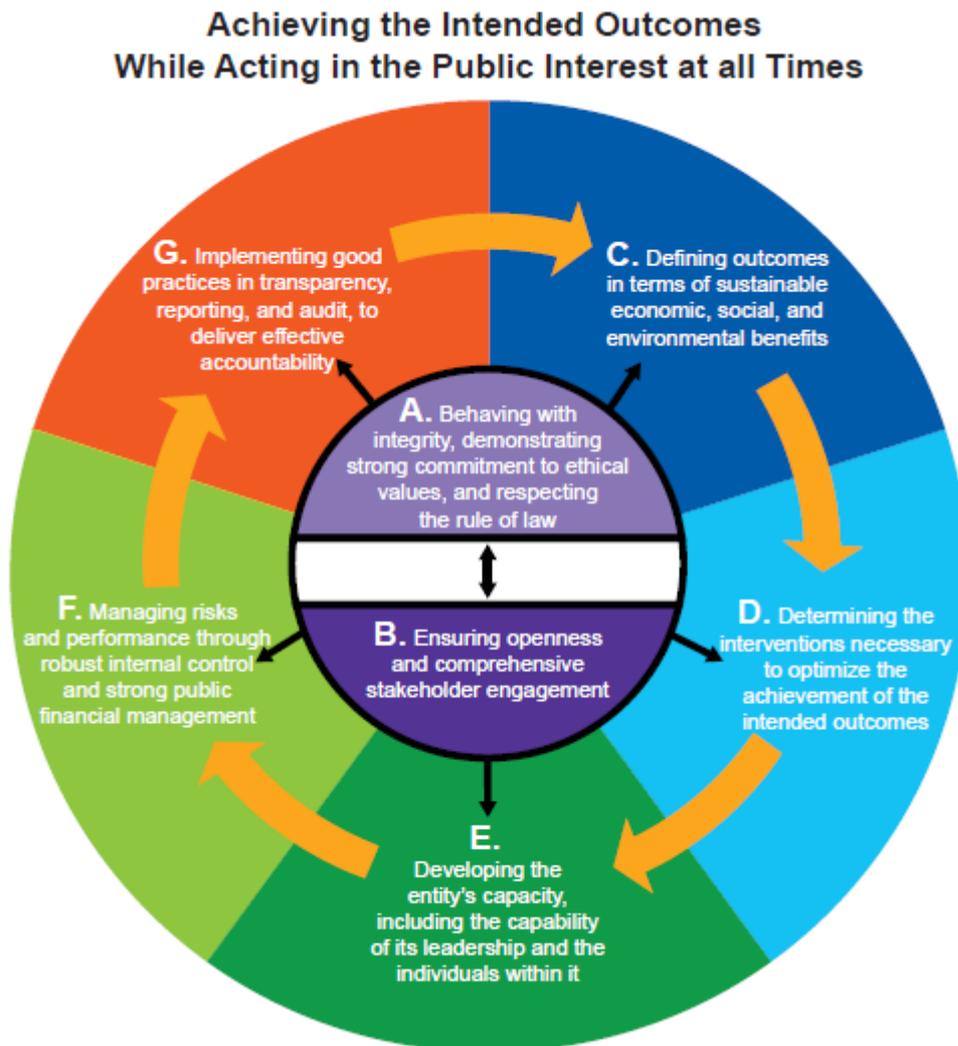
- 2.1 'The International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector' defines 'governance' as comprising the arrangements (including political, economic, social, environmental, administrative, legal and other arrangements) put in place to ensure that the intended outcomes for stakeholders are defined and achieved. The Framework also states that to deliver good governance in the public sector both governing bodies and individuals working for them must aim to achieve the Council's objectives while acting in the public interest at all times.

### 3. Core Principles

- 3.1 The Council's Code of Corporate Governance is based on seven core principles:-

- A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law;
- B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement;
- C. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits;
- D. Determining the interventions necessary to optimize the achievement of the intended outcomes;
- E. Developing the Council's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it;
- F. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management; and
- G. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.

3.2 The diagram below, taken from the International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector (CIPFA/IFAC, 2014) (the 'International Framework'), illustrates the various principles of good governance in the public sector and how they relate to each other.



3.3 The Local Code specifically identifies the actions and behaviours taken by the Council in relation to each of these core principles and associated sub principles. These are summarised within Appendix A. Appendix B sets out the Local Corporate Governance Framework.

3.4 The Audit Committee is responsible for approving this Code and it is recommended that this is annually reviewed and updated accordingly. This Code was approved by the Committee at its meeting on 03/04/2017.

## Appendix A - Actions and behaviours taken by the Council that demonstrate good governance.

Principle	Sub Principle	Council's Actions and Behaviours
<b>(A) Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law</b>	Behaving with integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that Members and Officers behave with integrity and lead a culture where acting in the public interest is visible and consistently demonstrated thereby protecting the reputation of the Council;</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that Members take the lead in establishing specific standard operating principles or values for the Council and its staff and that they are communicated and understood. These will build on the Seven Principles of Public Life (The Nolan Principles);</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lead by example and use the above standard operating principles or values as a framework for decision making and other actions; and</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrate, communicate and embed the standard operating principles or values through appropriate policies and processes which will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they are operating effectively.</li> </ul>
	Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek to establish, monitor and maintain the Council's ethical standards and performance;</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Underpin personal behaviour with ethical values and ensure they permeate all aspects of the Council's culture and operation;</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and maintain robust policies and procedures which place emphasis on agreed ethical values; and</li> </ul>
	Respecting the Rule of Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that external providers of services on behalf of the organisation are required to act with integrity and in compliance with ethical standards expected by the Council.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure Members and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of the law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations;</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create the conditions to ensure that the statutory officers, other key post holders, and Members are able to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative and regulatory provisions;</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strive to optimise the use of the full powers available for the benefit of citizens, communities and other stakeholders;</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deal with breaches of legal and regulatory provisions effectively; and</li> </ul>

Principle	Sub Principle	Council's Actions and Behaviours
<b>(B) Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement</b>	Openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure an open culture through demonstrating, documenting and communicating the Council's commitment to openness;</li> <li>▪ Make decisions that are open about actions, plans, resource use, forecasts, outputs and outcomes. The presumption will be for openness. If that is not the case, a justification for the reasoning for keeping a decision confidential will be provided;</li> <li>▪ Provide clear reasoning and evidence for decisions in both public records and explanations to stakeholders and will be explicit about the criteria, rationale and considerations used. In due course, the Council will ensure that the impact and consequences of those decisions are clear; and</li> <li>▪ Use formal and informal consultation and engagement to determine the most appropriate and effective interventions / courses of action.</li> </ul>
	Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Effectively engage with institutional stakeholders to ensure that the purpose, objectives and intended outcomes for each stakeholder relationship are clear so that outcomes are achieved successfully and sustainably;</li> <li>▪ Develop formal and informal partnerships to allow for resources to be used more efficiently and outcomes achieved more effectively; and</li> <li>▪ Ensure that partnerships are based on 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.</li> </ul>
	Engaging stakeholders effectively, including individual citizens and service users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish a clear policy on the type of issues that the Council will meaningfully consult with or involve communities, individual citizens, service users and other stakeholders to ensure that service (or other) provision is contributing towards the achievement of intended outcomes;</li> <li>▪ Ensure that communication methods are effective and that Members and Officers are clear about their roles with regard to community engagement;</li> <li>▪ Encourage, collect and evaluate the views and experiences of communities, citizens, service users and organisations of different backgrounds including reference to future needs;</li> <li>▪ Implement effective feedback mechanisms in order to demonstrate how their views have been taken into account;</li> <li>▪ Balance feedback from more active stakeholder groups with other stakeholder groups to ensure inclusivity; and</li> <li>▪ Take account of the interests of future generations of tax payers and service users.</li> </ul>

Principle	Sub Principle	Council's Actions and Behaviours
<b>( C ) Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits</b>	Defining outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have a clear vision, which is an agreed formal statement of the Council's purpose and intended outcomes containing appropriate performance indicators, which provides the basis for the Council's overall strategy, planning and other decisions;</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Specify the intended impact on, or changes for, stakeholders including citizens and service users. It could be immediately or over the course of a year or longer;</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Deliver defined outcomes on a sustainable basis within the resources that will be available;</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify and manage risks to the achievement of outcomes; and</li> </ul>
	Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Manage service users' expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consider and balance the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies, plans and decisions when taking decisions about service provision;</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Take a longer term view with regard to decision making, taking account of risk and acting transparently where there are potential conflicts between the Council's intended outcomes and short-term factors such as the political cycle or financial constraints;</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Determine 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; and</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure fair access to services.</li> </ul>		

Principle	Sub Principle	Council's Actions and Behaviours
<b>(D) Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes</b>	Determining interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure 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; and</li> </ul>
	Planning interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consider 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.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish and implement robust planning and control cycles that cover strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets;</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Engage with internal and external stakeholders in determining how services and other courses of action should be planned and delivered;</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consider and monitor risks facing each partner when working collaboratively including shared risks;</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure arrangements are flexible and agile so that the mechanisms for delivering outputs can be adapted to changing circumstances;</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs) as part of the planning process in order to identify how the performance of services and projects is to be measured;</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure capacity exists to generate the information required to review service quality regularly;</li> </ul>
	Optimising achievement of intended outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prepare budgets in accordance with organisational objectives, strategies and the medium term financial plan; and</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inform medium and long term resource planning by drawing up realistic estimates of revenue and capital expenditure aimed at developing a sustainable funding strategy.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure the medium term financial strategy integrates and balances service priorities, affordability and other resource constraints;</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure the budgeting process is all-inclusive, taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure 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; and</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure 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".</li> </ul>		

Principle	Sub Principle	Council's Actions and Behaviours
<b>(E) Developing the Council's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it</b>	Developing the Council's capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review operations, performance use of assets on a regular basis to ensure their continuing effectiveness;</li> <li>▪ Improve resource use through appropriate application of techniques such as benchmarking and other options in order to determine how the Council's resources are allocated so that outcomes are achieved effectively and efficiently;</li> <li>▪ Recognise the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved; and</li> <li>▪ Develop and maintain an effective workforce plan to enhance the strategic allocation of resources.</li> </ul>
	Developing the capability of the Council's leadership and other individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop 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;</li> <li>▪ Publish a statement that specifies the types of decisions that are delegated and those reserved for the collective decision making of the governing body;</li> <li>▪ Ensure the Leader and the Chief Executive have clearly defined and distinctive leadership roles within a structure whereby the Chief Executive leads the Council in implementing strategy and managing the delivery of services and other outputs set by Members and each provides a check and a balance for each other's authority;</li> <li>▪ Develop the capabilities of Members and senior management to achieve effective shared leadership and to enable the organisation to respond successfully to changing legal and policy demands as well as economic, political and environmental changes and risks by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 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;</li> <li>➤ 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; and</li> <li>➤ ensuring personal, organisational and system-wide development through shared learning, including lessons learnt from governance weaknesses both internal and external.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Ensure that there are structures in place to encourage public participation;</li> <li>▪ Take steps to consider the leadership's own effectiveness and ensure leaders are open to constructive feedback from peer review and inspections;</li> <li>▪ Hold staff to account through regular performance reviews which take account of training or development needs; and</li> <li>▪ Ensure arrangements are in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce and support individuals in maintaining their own physical and mental wellbeing.</li> </ul>

Principle	Sub Principle	Council's Actions and Behaviours
<b>(F) Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management</b>	Managing Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Recognise that risk management is an integral part of all activities and must be considered in all aspects of decision making;</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implement robust and integrated risk management arrangements and ensure that they are working effectively; and</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure that responsibilities for managing individual risks are clearly allocated.</li> </ul>
	Managing Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Monitor service delivery effectively including planning, specification, execution and independent post implementation review;</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make decisions based on relevant, clear objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks inherent in the Council's financial, social and environmental position and outlook;</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure 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 Council's performance and that of any organisation for which it is responsible;</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide Members and senior management with regular reports on service delivery plans and on progress towards outcome achievement; and</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure there is consistency between specification stages (such as budgets) and post implementation reporting (e.g. financial statements).</li> </ul>
	Robust internal control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Align the risk management strategy and policies on internal control with achieving objectives;</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evaluate and monitor the Council's risk management and internal control arrangements on a regular basis;</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure effective counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are in place;</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure additional assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control is provided by the internal auditor;</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure an Audit Committee which is independent of the executive and accountable to the Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ provides a further source of effective assurance regarding arrangements for managing risk and maintaining an effective control environment; and</li> <li>➤ that its recommendations are listened to and acted upon.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Principle	Sub Principle	Council's Actions and Behaviours
<b>(F) Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management</b>	Managing Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure effective arrangements are in place for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data, including processes to safeguard personal data;</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure effective arrangements are in place and operating effectively when sharing data with other bodies; and</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review and audit regularly the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring;</li> </ul>
	Strong public financial management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure financial management supports both long term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance; and</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure well –developed financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control, including management of financial risks and controls.</li> </ul>

Principle	Sub Principle	Council's Actions and Behaviours
<b>(G) Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability</b>	Implementing good practice in transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Write and communicate reports for the public and other stakeholders in a fair, balanced and understandable style appropriate to the intended audience ensuring that they are easy to access and interrogate; and</li> <li>▪ Strike 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.</li> </ul>
	Implementing good practices in reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Report at least annually on performance, value for money and the stewardship of its resources to stakeholders in a timely and understandable way;</li> <li>▪ Ensure Members and senior management own the results;</li> <li>▪ Ensure robust arrangements for assessing the extent to which the principles contained in this Framework have been applied and publish the results on this assessment including an action plan for improvement and evidence to demonstrate good governance (Annual Governance Statement);</li> <li>▪ Ensure that the Framework is applied to jointly managed or shared service organisations as appropriate; and</li> <li>▪ Ensure the performance information that accompanies the financial statements is prepared on a consistent and timely basis and the statements allow for comparison with other similar organisations.</li> </ul>
	Assurance and effective accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure that recommendations for corrective action made by external audit are acted upon;</li> <li>▪ Ensure an effective internal audit service with direct access to Members is in place which provides assurance with regard to governance arrangements and that recommendations are acted upon;</li> <li>▪ Welcome peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and implement recommendations;</li> <li>▪ Gain assurance on risks associated with delivering services through third parties and evidence this in the annual governance statement; and</li> <li>▪ Ensure that when working in partnership, arrangements for accountability are clear and that the need for wider public accountability has been recognised and met.</li> </ul>

## Appendix B – Central Bedfordshire Council’s Corporate Governance Framework

‘The International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector’ defines ‘governance’ as comprising the arrangements put in place to ensure that the intended outcomes for stakeholders are defined and achieved. The framework also states that to deliver good governance in the public sector both governing bodies and individuals working for them must try to achieve the Council’s objectives while acting in the public interest at all times.

Core Principles	(A) Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law	(B) Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement	(C ) Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits	(D) Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes	(E ) Developing the Council’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it	(F) Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management	(G) Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability
Evidence of Good Governance	Constitution	Constitution	Committee Reports	Budget Consultation	Constitution	Constitution	Audit Committee
	Code of Financial Governance	Decision making Committees	Five Year Plan, setting out objectives	Other Consultations	Member Induction	Code of Financial Governance	Overview and Scrutiny Committees
	Code of Procurement Governance	Overview and Scrutiny Committees	Consultations	Stakeholder Engagement	Member Development Programme	Audit Committee	Decision Making Protocols
	Ethical Handbook within Constitution	Council website includes published calendar of meetings, including agenda printed minutes and key decisions.	Risk Management Strategy	Option Appraisals	Workforce and Organisational Development Strategy and Work streams	Overview and Scrutiny Committees	External audit of accounts and value for money opinion
	Member Induction	Webcasting of meetings	Strategic performance, financial and risk reporting framework	Five Year Plan, setting out objectives	Secondments	Risk Management Strategy	Annual Statement of Accounts

'The International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector' defines 'governance' as comprising the arrangements put in place to ensure that the intended outcomes for stakeholders are defined and achieved. The framework also states that to deliver good governance in the public sector both governing bodies and individuals working for them must try to achieve the Council's objectives while acting in the public interest at all times.

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	Member Development Programme	Public Meetings	Scrutiny Framework	Medium Term Financial Plan	Leadership Development Programme	Emergency/Business Continuity Management	Annual Governance Statement / Assurance Framework
	Schemes of Delegation / Decision making protocols	FOI Request Information	Procurement/Commissioning toolkit	Decision Making Protocols	Staff Performance Development Review	Financial Procedures	Head of Internal Audit and Risk's Annual Opinion / Report
	Audit Committee	Online Council Tax information	Environmental Information Regulations (EIR)	Strategic Commissioning Plans	Your Year/360 reviews	External audit of accounts and value for money opinion / Statement of Accounts	Internal Audit Service
	Standards Sub Committee	Five Year Plan, setting out objectives	Medium Term Financial Plan	Risk Management Strategy	Consideration of alternative service delivery models/ Shared Services e.g. LGSS	Medium Term Financial Plan	Strategic performance, financial and risk reporting framework

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	Scrutiny Framework	Consultations	Capital Programme	Consideration of alternative service delivery models/ Shared Services e.g. LGSS	Continuing Professional Development Programmes	Consideration of risk in decision making processes (e.g. Committee reports).	Open Data and Transparency Code
	Financial Procedures	Open Data and Transparency Code	New School Places Programme	Strategic performance, financial and risk reporting framework	Peer Reviews / External Inspections	Strategic Risk Register / Operational Risk Registers	Website
	Scheme for Financing Schools	Customer feedback / Complaints Policy	Transport Strategy and associated strategies	Medium Term Financial Plan	Benchmarking	Risk Based Internal Auditing Service / planning	External inspections/peer reviews
	Financial Regulations for Schools	Annual Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement published			Safety, Health and Wellbeing	Head of Internal Audit and Risk's Annual Opinion / Report	Publication Scheme Statement

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	Statutory Officers Roles Chief Executive, Chief Financial Officer/Monitoring Officer / Legal Services	Community Engagement Strategy			Staff 1:1	Strategic performance, financial and risk reporting framework	Complaints Annual reports (Adult Social Care and Children's)
	Members and Officers Codes of Conduct	Partnership arrangements.			Periodic staff surveys	Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy	
	Members / Officers Register of Interests / Register of Gifts and Hospitality	Partnership Protocol				Information Risk Management Process	
	Protocol for Member Officer Relations	Publication Scheme Statement				Information Asset Risk Register	
	Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy (including Anti Bribery)	Local Code of Governance				IT Acceptable Usage Policy	

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	Confidential Reporting Code (Whistleblowing)	Social Media				Information Sharing Protocols	
	Risk Management Strategy						
	Procurement Guidance						
	Complaints Procedure						
	IT Acceptable Usage Policy						
	Transsexual, Transgender and Gender Re-assignment guidance						
	Council's Vision and Values						

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