

# **Annual Governance Statement**

**Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council**

**ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**  
**For the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023**

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## **Scope of responsibility**

Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough 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. In discharging this responsibility, Councillors and Senior Officers are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council's affairs and for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of its functions, and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

To this end, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council has approved and adopted a local code of corporate governance, which is consistent with the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (CIPFA/SOLACE) joint framework for delivering good governance in local government. CIPFA issued an update to the Framework in 2016, which has informed the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) from 2016/17 onwards. A copy of the local code can be found on the Council's website (dated 2019 at the time of issuing this statement).

This statement explains how Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council has complied with the local code and meets the requirements of regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 in relation to the publication of an Annual Governance Statement.

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

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes for the direction and control of the Authority and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with, and leads the community. It enables the Authority to monitor the achievements of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that 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 the risks to the achievement of Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively, and economically.

The governance framework has been in place at Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

## **Impact of the macro environmental impacts on the governance arrangements**

The Council has faced continued challenges during 2022/23, particularly in respect to the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic but more specifically the war in Ukraine, the rate of inflation, borrowing rates and unforeseen utility prices promoting the cost of living crisis. The pandemic has resulted in changes to working practices (e.g. agile and remote working etc.) which have required a greater degree of flexibility and risk-based decision making at certain levels in the authority which, have continued throughout the duration of the reporting period for this statement. As reported in the 2021/22 Annual Governance Statement, due to the relaxation of Covid restrictions from February 2022, the impact of the pandemic has remained negligible upon the Council's Governance arrangements. However, the Council did prompt a refresh of the Council Business Continuity arrangements, working in partnership with the Coventry Solihull and Warwickshire Emergency Planning and Business Continuity team to provide a consistent and cohesive response should an event occur. Furthermore, Cabinet was presented the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) in November 2022 covering a rolling five-year plan that sets out the Council's commitment to provide services that meet the needs of local people with focus on value for money, working within the resources available in accordance with the objectives set in the Build a Better Borough Corporate Plan. Despite this, regular budget monitoring for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital Budgets, together with treasury management reports, were reported to Cabinet (and where applicable to Council) to outline the impact on the financial position of the authority and impact on services due to macro environment factors such as the war in Ukraine, the rate of inflation,

borrowing rates and unforeseen utility prices. Consequently, and most notable, it was decided in January 2023, to delay any further work on the Bedworth Physical Activity Hub project (one of the largest projects the Council is intending to delivery) due to rising costs for the remainder of the Financial Year until other sources of finance could support the delivery of the project. Secondly, it was decided (October 2022) to not re-open the Civic Hall due to constrains placed upon the Council.

### **Review of effectiveness**

Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control.

The review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by:

- the work of the internal auditors and the Head of Audit and Governance's Annual Report.
- Directors within the Authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control environment; and
- comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

Assurance statements have been received from the Chief Executive and Directors setting out their confirmation that the control systems in place are adequate and that they are being complied with.

The review for the 2022-23 statement has been carried out by the Management Team and the final statement was approved virtually on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

The process that has been applied in maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control includes:

### **Corporate Governance and Council**

- The Monitoring Officer has a duty to monitor and review the operation of the Constitution to ensure its aims and principles are given full effect.

- The Council reviews the Local Code of Corporate Governance on a regular basis and adopts an action plan to deal with any issues. The Audit and Standards Committee approved a revised Local Code in July 2018, which is consistent with the principles set out in the CIPFA/Solace Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016. The Local Code is due to be reviewed and updated during 2023/24.
- The Anti-Fraud and Bribery Strategy and Fraud Response Plan demonstrate the Council's commitment to the prevention and detection of all types of fraud, corruption and bribery and extends to members, employees, and partners. It also puts the onus on managers to create an environment in which employees, contractors and partners feel able to approach them with concerns. A revised Anti-Fraud and Bribery Strategy was approved by the Audit and Standards Committee in January 2018 and is due to be reviewed again during 2023/24.
- A Council Tax, Housing Benefit, and Council Tax Support Penalty and Prosecution Policy was approved by Cabinet in December 2022. The purpose of the Policy is to set out the action the Council may take in cases of fraud or misinformation in relation to Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support and Council Tax discounts and exemptions.
- The Head of Audit and Governance has been appointed as the Council's 'Whistleblowing Officer' and will be the first point of contact in conjunction with the Monitoring Officer to receive concerns that are raised under the Council's Confidential Reporting Code.
- Overview and Scrutiny Panels (OSP's) can 'call in' a decision which has been made by the Cabinet, Portfolio Holder, or other authorised decision taker, where it has not yet been implemented, to enable them to consider whether the decision is appropriate. They allow people to have a greater say in Council matters by holding public inquiries into matters of local concern.
- The Council's Partnership Framework supports the planning and delivery of effective partnership working and ensures that any partnerships the Council is involved in are managed with appropriate governance arrangements. A revised Framework was approved by the Audit and Standards Committee in March 2018.
- Overview and Scrutiny Panels receive regular reports on the work of the key partnerships.
- The Council has in place a Proceeds of Crime (Anti Money Laundering) Framework, which aims to maintain high standards of conduct and prevent criminal activity through money laundering. A revised Framework was approved by the Audit and Standards Committee in November 2017 and is due to be updated during 2023/24.
- On the 17 April 2013 the Council approved a revised policy for inclusion in the Constitution on Gifts & Hospitality which incorporates the changes brought about by the Bribery Act 2010. The policy was reviewed during 2020/21 and a revised version was approved by Council in April 2021.

- An annual report is presented to Elected Members to consider the Register of Members Interests and the content of the registers of Gifts and Hospitality for Members and Officers. The last report was presented to the Audit and Standards Committee in November 2022.
- The Council has approved changes to the Constitution where appropriate to ensure decision making is legal, timely and robust. There is a Constitution Review Working Party which oversees and make recommendations on the Constitution.
- The Council has a trading arm – NABCEL – which operates commercially. There is a Shareholder Agreement in place which sets out clearly the decision-making responsibilities of both NABCEL and the Council as the only shareholder. The Shareholder Role is exercised through a politically balanced committee of Cabinet (titled as the Nuneaton and Bedworth Community Enterprise Limited (NABCEL) Shareholder Committee) which met three times during the 2022/23 Financial Year.
  - It is worth noting that NBBC is one of 8 shareholders in Sherbourne Recycling Limited. Coventry City Council is the main shareholder. Coventry City Council hold a Shareholder Committee in which performance data and updates are presented to the committee at least once a year. In addition, Board meetings take place at officer level and respective portfolio holders also meet to discuss progress.
  - In addition, NBBC is also a shareholder, amongst 32 others of West Midlands Employers (WME). WME have a representative body comprising of the Chief Executive of each subscribing member council who agrees the business plans, budgets and other constitutional matters. WME also report through an Elected Member Management Board nominated from sub-regional groupings covering Birmingham; Black Country; Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire; Worcestershire; Herefordshire, Telford and Wrekin and Shropshire; and Staffordshire and Stoke with an additional member representing the District Councils. The chair of the WME Management Board is Cllr Ken Meeson, Cabinet Member for Solihull MBC and the Vice Chair is Cllr Tristan Chatfield, Cabinet Member for Birmingham City Council.
- The Council has a zero tolerance to all forms of fraud and corruption. The Council employs a Counter Fraud Officer who works closely with the Revenue and Benefits and Housing Teams to identify, deter, and prevent fraud. The Audit and Standards Committee received an annual report on 5th September 2023 summarising the Counter Fraud Activity for the 2022/23 Financial Year.
- The Council has a joint working arrangement with the Department for Work and Pensions so cases which involve both Housing Benefit and a Council Tax Reduction will be investigated jointly.
- the Council established a further standing committee to deal with employment matters and related issues concerning, amongst other things, terms & conditions of employment and the approval of Human Resources policies in July 2021 and this committee (Employment Committee) continued to operate during the statement period meeting three times during the 2022/2023 Financial Year.

- The Director – Finance and Enterprise submitted two reports to Cabinet in October 2022, one being the revised Equality Policy and the second being the Benefit Fraud Penalty and Prosecution Policy for approval. Both reports and policies obtained the approval of Cabinet.
- Cabinet also agreed to a new Tenancy Fraud Policy in October 2022.
- The Director – Regeneration and Housing submitted a report to Cabinet in December 2022, detailing the proposals to amend the governance approach to both the Transforming Nuneaton and Transforming Bedworth programmes. The approved approach adopts the Managing Special Programmes (MSP) approach, which is the best practice model for managing and delivering major projects and programmes. The adoption of this methodology is required by Central Government for all projects that are in receipt of Government funding.
- The Director – Public Services submitted a report to Cabinet in January 2023, seeking approval from Cabinet for the adoption of the Councils Water Safety Policy. Cabinet subsequently approved the policy (Ref CL42) to ensure focus on site safety and on exploring and determining how we can manage the risk that our water bodies could pose to the public, our employees, and contractors.
- The Strategic Creditors and Procurement Manager submitted the proposed new Procurement & Accounts Payable Strategy for 2023 – 2027 to Cabinet for approval in March 2023 which subsequently was approved by Cabinet.

## **Information Management**

- A revised Information Governance Framework, ICT Code of Conduct for Employees, and the Members Protocol for use of the Council's ICT Resources was approved by the Portfolio Holder for Central Services in August 2017
- The Information Management Group is made up of Officers from across the Council that represent all Council Directorates.
- With the management Team restructure completed in September 2021, the Director Customer & Corporate Services was appointed as the Senior Information Risk Owner and the Head of Audit and Governance is the Deputy.
- A Customer Experience Officer was appointed in October 2021 whose role expanded to include that of the Data Protection Officer. The role is now titled Customer Experience and Data Protection Officer. The post holder has undergone external training to support this additional responsibility.
- The Council has introduced an electronic process for reporting data breaches and near misses internally to the Data Protection Officer ensure that all appropriate action can be taken promptly.

- All data breaches and near misses are discussed with the Information Management Group to enable any lessons learned to be shared.
- All employees and senior managers receive mandatory data protection training and attendance is monitored.
- Subject Access and other information rights requests are processed in line with the new statutory timescales
- The Council carries out an annual compliance check to ensure its infrastructure is sufficiently secure to connect to the Public Service Network. The current certificate expired in August 2021 and renewal was delayed whilst a significant infrastructure (Azure) migration has been undertaken. The certificate has been renewed during the 22/23 financial year.

The Council was assessed as meeting the Government backed Cyber Essentials Scheme and as such has defences that are satisfactory against commodity based cyber-attacks. The certificate expired in December 2018 and was to be renewed when the unsupported Northgate Housing Software was replaced. There was a delay in the implementation with the new CIVICA CX system, however this work is now complete. The Council has subsequently been assessed and has fallen short of certification due to reasons such as mobile devices requiring renewal or legacy software becoming unsupported during the assessment period. The Council's ICT team have achieved the renewal propose was undertaken and remedial works identified which are due to be undertaken during 2022/23 in order to re-obtain the certification.

### **Audit and Standards Committee**

- The purpose of the Council's Audit and Standards Committee is to provide independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the internal control environment. It provides an independent review of governance, risk management and control frameworks and oversees the financial reporting and annual governance processes. It oversees internal and external audit, helping to ensure efficient and effective assurance arrangements are in place.
- In order to ensure high standards of conduct and probity, the Committee also plays a key part in strengthening and maintaining the highest standards of ethical conduct which the public is entitled to expect from both Members and Officers of the Council. The Committee approved a new Code of Conduct for Elected Members in March 2021, based upon the model used by Warwickshire County Council. The intention behind this was to ensure that a single code applied, particularly where there are "twin-hatters" who are subject to both the Council's and the County Council's code of conduct.
- The Committee also receives and reviews the Annual Monitoring Report from the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman. This was considered in November 2022. 3 cases were upheld against the Council and a report setting out the actions to respond to the recommendations was considered by the Committee.

- The Audit & Standards Committee also undertakes a monitoring role in connection with probity matters raising from “Whistle-blowing” complaints brought under the Council’s Confidential Reporting Code. One complaint was considered by the Committee in March 2022 and the actions of the Council were noted.
- The Audit and Standards Committee received a report (5th September 2023) summarising the Internal Audit Annual Report which outlines the findings of an assessment of the internal audit function against the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and quality assurance programme. The report also summarised the internal audit work upon which an overall opinion on the control environment was presented which resulted in satisfactory assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Council’s framework of governance, risk management and control.

### **Management Team**

- The Management Team meets on a weekly basis and reviews progress on performance measures, risk management reviews and inspections at the end of each month. These are done by exception to focus attention on key issues that may require action. Management Team and Cabinet also receive a monthly Strategic Performance Report showing key financial and non-financial performance data, using a ‘traffic light’ system.
- The Management Team structure has remained consistent throughout the Financial Year, following on from the update provided in the previous Annual Governance Statement (21/22). For the avoidance of any doubt, this comprised of a Chief Executive and five (5) Directors. Of the five (5) Directors, one acted as the designated Monitoring Officer, another fulfils the role of the Section 1-5-1 Officer and a 3rd Director fulfils the role of Deputy Chief Executive.
- Arising from the Corporate Peer Challenge, a recommendation was made to develop an appropriate project management framework with clearly identified Senior Responsible Owners, appropriate governance arrangements including engagement with key support services such as finance and legal to ensure decisions are taken in a lawful and timely way, with standard templates and processes for implementation and monitoring, will strengthen the delivery of NBBC’s projects.

### **Performance Management**

- The TEN Performance Management System is used to report performance to officers, members and the public and highlight under-performing services. Corrective action plans are then put in place to address issues. Performance management is reported to Scrutiny Panel on a quarterly basis during the year, via integrated finance and performance reports.



- The Council's Performance Management Framework was updated and approved by the Audit and Standards Committee in November 2021 and is now included in the Council's Constitution.
- Greater use of benchmarking is now used in the Performance Reports to enable the Council to be measured against good performance and the intention is to continually enhance this further on an on-going basis.
- The Council continues to use transformation approaches as a means of improving service delivery and overall value for money. Having adopted an enterprise strategy in February 2022, the Council approved a budget to fund a service transformation programme in February 2022 to deliver financial sustainability linked to the Council's MTFP.
- Services that have previously been subject to a performance review continue to embed continuous improvement which ensures continual monitoring and review to ensure the service is still providing an effective service to its customers.

### **Financial Management Arrangements**

- The Council appointed a new Chief Financial Officer (CFO) in January 2022, which is a statutory post responsible for the financial management arrangements of the authority. The new post holder was appointed to the role of Director – Finance & Enterprise and commenced the role on 2 May 2022. The CFO is a member of the Management Team. The role conforms to the requirements within the updated CIPFA statement on the role of the CFO in Local Government and the post holder remains with the Council. The CFO issued the Statement of Accounts 2020/2021 and Audit Findings for Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council to the Audit and Standards Committee in August 2022 which sought approval.
- The Financial and Contract Procedure Rules [FPRs and CPRs] are used by all officers and Members to ensure effective use of resources and robust and transparent decision making. Both the FPR's and CPRs were reviewed in 2019/20 and approved in May 2020. With regards to the CPRs, the Government issued a Green Paper in December 2020 (titled Transforming Public Procurement) setting out its vision to transform the public procurement regime. The Bill is progressing through the House of Lords before being approved by the House of Commons and then seeking Royal Assent. Originally the indication was that the new Act will be live on or around May 2023, however, it is now expected October 2024. This timescale become apparent during the 22/23 financial year so no update has been undertaken by the Council but it is likely to update the CPR's during the 2023/24 financial year to ensure they are aligned with the provisions of the new Act. The Procurement team frequently review updates and inform key stakeholders of the updates in readiness for the new Act to ensure NBBC is ready (as best as it can be) for the new regime. As outlined above, Cabinet approved in March 2023 the new Procurement & Accounts Payable Strategy for 2023 – 2027. The strategy had been to the Finance & Public Services OSP in January 2023 and recommended to Cabinet for approval and adoption.

- Corporate Governance Training programme provided to Senior Officers throughout 2022/23 including the following topics:
  - Procurement
  - Accounts Payable
  - Contract Management
  - Bribery
  - Gifts and Hospitality

Note that e-learning corporate governance was still available.

- A revised Medium Term Financial Plan was reported to Cabinet in November 2022 covering a rolling five-year plan that sets out the Council's commitment to provide services that meet the needs of local people with focus on value for money, working within the resources available in accordance with the objectives set in the Build a Better Borough Corporate Plan. It outlined the savings required over the period 2020-2023, based on the one-year 'roll-over' settlement offered by central government for 2020/21. A further one-year roll-over settlement was also offered by central government for 2021/22. High-level reviews of the Plan were carried out in February 2021 and February 2022 as part of the budget setting process. These noted that a more fundamental review of the Plan was difficult in the absence of a multi-year Settlement or Spending Review, which was delayed by government for another year due to the pandemic. The key messages from the Plan are communicated to all employees. The Corporate Peer Challenge specifically noted the need for an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy, and this has been incorporated into the 2022/23 Action Plan. This will take into account any long-term impact of COVID-19 as well as the likely impact of the Business Rates Review and Fair Funding Review, if known at that point.
- The Treasury Management Strategy is reviewed each year, as a result of the economic conditions and investments in Icelandic banks. We have continued to keep our Counterparty list under review, in liaison with our external advisors. Council received reports on our Treasury activity in October 2022 which provided an annual report for 21/22, mid-year review in November 2022, and a report regarding the Treasury Strategy & Budgetary Framework 2023/24 in February 2023.
- Effective financial management arrangements have been crucial during the financial year, noting the macro environmental factors. Key decisions were made by Cabinet (such as Bedworth Physical Activity Hub and Bedworth Civic Hall).

## **Risk Management**

- The Council's Risk Management Strategy was last updated and approved by the Audit and Standards Committee in January 2022. Risks are managed using Strategic and Operational Risk Registers.
- The Audit and Standards Committee is responsible for monitoring the effective development and operation of risk management procedures across the Council.
- Overview and Scrutiny Panels receive quarterly reports on the risks within the Strategic Risk Register that are relevant to their area of responsibility. At the end of the financial year, they have sight of the full register.
- The Council insures against the risk of loss, particularly financial loss. The levels of cover and the excess amounts are continually reviewed and updated to reduce exposure to an acceptable level.
- Since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 the insurance service has been provided by Warwickshire County Council under a formal service level agreement and the Council also obtains strategic support, advice and risk management services from its appointed Insurance Broker (Arthur J. Gallagher (UK) Limited).

## **Internal Audit**

- Internal Audit is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organisations operation. It is responsible for monitoring the quality and effectiveness of the control environment comprising risk management, control, and governance.
- A risk model is used to formulate the internal and computer audit plans which are agreed by the Management Team and approved by the Audit and Standards Committee.
- Where necessary, internal audit will identify areas for improvement and make recommendations and agree an action plan for Service Managers. A summary of the issues arising is presented to the Audit and Standards Committee. The last reports were considered by the Committee in July 2022 and November 2022.
- A review of the effectiveness of Internal Audit is completed annually; an external quality assessment was completed in January 2019, with the next review due during 2024, to ensure compliance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. The overall conclusion was that the internal audit service complies with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and provides an efficient and effective service to the Council.

## Transparency

- The government maintains a commitment to increasing transparency across central and local government in order to make data more readily available and enable residents to hold service providers truly to account. As a publicly funded organisation, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council is equally committed to openness and accountability.
- In 2021-22, the council published a series of datasets in line with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 and other transparency commitments including; senior staff salaries, organisation chart, spending on items over £500, credit card transactions, details of contracts (goods, services and works), register of Purchase Orders and also the adopted Pay Policy Statement. To promote transparency and wider engagement with council decisions, residents can use digital platforms such as; Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to get updates from, and interact with, the authority.
- Cabinet approved in September 2023, the Borough Councils group Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Annual Statement for the 2022/23 Financial Year.

## Other Sources of Assurance

As stated above, reliance has been placed on other sources of assurance in 2022/23 with respect to the Head of Audit and Governance's opinion. Other sources of assurance have been obtained in year activity but also by reflecting on past opinions and the basis of these.

The Council commissioned its first Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) in September 2021. The LGA CPC report highlights a number of positive aspects in the way the Council operates, including our ambition and place leadership, our financial management track record and the relationship across the Councillors and Officers who make up the senior team. Importantly the LGA CPC report also identifies areas where the Borough Council can improve and an action plan was approved by Cabinet in November 2021. The LGA CPC Review Team conducted a "six month check-in" session in March 2022 to consider how the Council had responded to the September CPC and were impressed with progress made to date against our Action Plan. The key actions have been incorporated into the 2022/23 Action Plan and are shown, where appropriate, with an asterisk\*.

The Council's External Auditors have met with the Section 151 Officer throughout 20221/232 and have also attended Audit and Standards Committee meetings. During this time, the External Auditor has not expressed any specific concern on the governance and/or financial arrangements operating within the Council.

Other examples of assurance obtained in year include:

- Completion of statutory returns, VAT returns, and grant claims, etc.
- Regular internal quality monitoring activities across many services
- Completion of annual development reviews of staff
- Regular performance, risk, contract and financial monitoring
- The annual Local Government Ombudsmen report.
- Completion of relevant mandatory training for all appropriate members of staff

### **Identifying the needs of Officers and Members**

- The Council has continued to develop Senior Managers with specific key learning topics, including regular finance updates, delivered at away days and is embedding the council's values throughout the organisation.
- The Council's values now form part of the recruitment process and employee's annual development reviews.
- The Council has implemented a Corporate Training System, DELTA (Develop, Enhance, Learn, Train, and Accomplish) which holds all training courses including mandatory ones. The system holds employees individual training records and sends notifications for refreshers. This will give the Council a more effective method of ensuring all training, specifically mandatory, is up to date and will ensure that an attendance record is maintained.
- Employees are updated on corporate issues through regular communication updates, in addition to specific publications from Management Team, as well as annual finance updates and training opportunities.
- Corporate Governance Training for Elected Members takes place annually alongside annual programme of Elected Member training.
- An emerging issue, replicated on a national scale, relates to the Council's ability to recruit and retain qualified and experienced staff in key areas such as Finance, Planning & Environmental Health. The Corporate Peer Challenge also noted the issue and

made specific recommendation to develop a People Strategy and to streamline the recruitment process, focusing upon the many benefits of working for the Council. These points have been taken on board and have been added to the Action Plan for 2022/23.

### **Significant governance issues**

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**Macro environmental factors as outlined in the statement have impacted on the Council, most notable interest rate rises, energy cost increases and cost pressures more generally which have required the Council to review service delivery in year.**

**An update on the action plan for 2022/23 is shown in the table below:**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Planned Completion Date</b>	<b>Status</b>
Implement a Corporate Document Retention Policy	Head of Audit and Governance and Data Protection Officer	Outstanding	Rolled over to 2023/24
Corporate Governance Training Elected Members and Senior Manager	Head of Audit and Governance, and the Strategic Creditors and Procurement Manager and Data Protection Officer	Completed for Members on 27 <sup>th</sup> May 2021 & 13 <sup>th</sup> July 2021  Completed for Senior Managers on March 2022  Procurement, Accounts Payable, Contract Management, Gifts, Hospitality and Bribery:	Completed

		Completed for Members on 16 <sup>th</sup> June 2022. Completed for Senior Officers 16 <sup>th</sup> May 2022, 18 <sup>th</sup> May 2022, 24 <sup>th</sup> May 2022, 10 <sup>th</sup> June 2022, 7th December 2022.	
Undertake training for the Audit and Standards Committee on the Statement of Accounts and Treasury Management	Head of Financial Services	June 2021	Completed
Undertake training for the Audit and Standards Committee on the roles of internal and external audit	Head of Audit and Governance	June 2021	Completed
Undertake training for the Audit and Standards Committee on dealing with complaints and hearings sub-committees	Director – Planning & Regulation	July 2021	Completed
Adoption of the new Code of Conduct for Elected Members	Director – Planning & Regulation	March 22	Completed

The review of the governance framework during 2021/22, together with the Corporate Peer Challenge undertaken by the Local Government Association has identified the following issues to be addressed in 2022/23:

<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Planned Completion Date</b>
Implement a Corporate Document Retention Policy	Data Protection Officer	Rolled over to 2023/24
Undertake training for the Audit and Standards Committee on the Statement of Accounts and Treasury Management	Head of Financial Services	February 2023
Undertake training for the Audit and Standards Committee on the roles of internal and external audit	Head of Audit and Governance	January 2023
Cyber essentials assessment undertaken and certified.  PSN compliance obtained	Director - Customer and Corporate Services	Assessment completed and remedial work identified. Revised assessment to be undertaken 2023/24  Feb 2023
An updated Medium Term Financial Strategy needs to be considered by the Council prior to its budget setting process in February 2023	Director – Finance & Enterprise	November 2022
Ensure staff recruitment and retention is linked to the People Strategy and underlying policies	Director - Customer and Corporate Services	Linked to employment committee work. Tabled for 2022/23
Implement a Corporate Programme Management approach to further	Director – Regeneration & Housing	Implementation & officer training May 2022 to March 2023



improve Governance related to major projects		Full roll out April 2023
Review the remit of the Corporate Governance Group to take account of the Corporate Programme Management approach.	Director – Finance & Enterprise	December 2022
Contract & Financial Procedure Rules review & update	Director – Finance & Enterprise	CPRs: In progress – new Procurement Act coming into force. Please see bullet point 2 under “Financial Management arrangements”.  FPRs: January 2023
Policy review to accommodate more agile working	Director - Customer and Corporate Services	The Employment Committee has received and will continue to receive employment policies for review, amendment and approval.
Asset review, especially use of the Town Hall	Director - Customer and Corporate Services  + Director of Housing and Regeneration	Ongoing but the Council is in Negotiations to lease part of the Town Hall to a public sector partner.
Undertake a Residents’ Survey	Director - Customer and Corporate Services	Rolled forward to 2022/23.

Consider the effective and consistent use of appropriate data to inform decision making	Management Team	Ongoing
Complete the development of some of the key strategies e.g. Economic Development Strategy, Town Centre Strategy	Director – Regeneration & Housing	December 2022 Draft documents being consulted upon. Adoption in 2023/24
Finalise the new corporate plan and ensure this supports the priorities of the council, is widely consulted on with partners and communicated for clarity across the council	Director - Customer and Corporate Services	April 2022. Corporate plan adopted BABB.
Ensure key projects have a clear purpose i.e. maximise income generation opportunities, social value etc	Director – Regeneration & Housing	Linked to Corporate Programme Management approach – full roll out April 2023
Review the internal and external approach to communications to ensure this supports priorities and ambitions	Director - Customer and Corporate Services	LGA Communications review undertaken August 2022.
Local Code of Corporate Governance, Anti-Fraud and Bribery Strategy and Fraud Response Plan.	Head of Audit and Governance	March 2023.
Identify and implement a replacement for the previously titled TEN Performance Management System	Director - Customer and Corporate Services	March 2023.
Local Governance Transparency Code Requirements – to be reviewed and identify any not being published	Corporate Governance Group	March 2023.

We propose over the coming year to take steps 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 our review of effectiveness. This Statement is intended to provide reasonable assurance on the strength of the authority's governance arrangements, although no system of control can provide absolute assurance against material misstatement or loss. The review of the control environment and governance framework has concluded that it is sound and fit for purpose and the actions needed above will ensure that further improvements are made. These issues will be addressed during 2022/23 and the action plan will be monitored by the Leadership Board.