

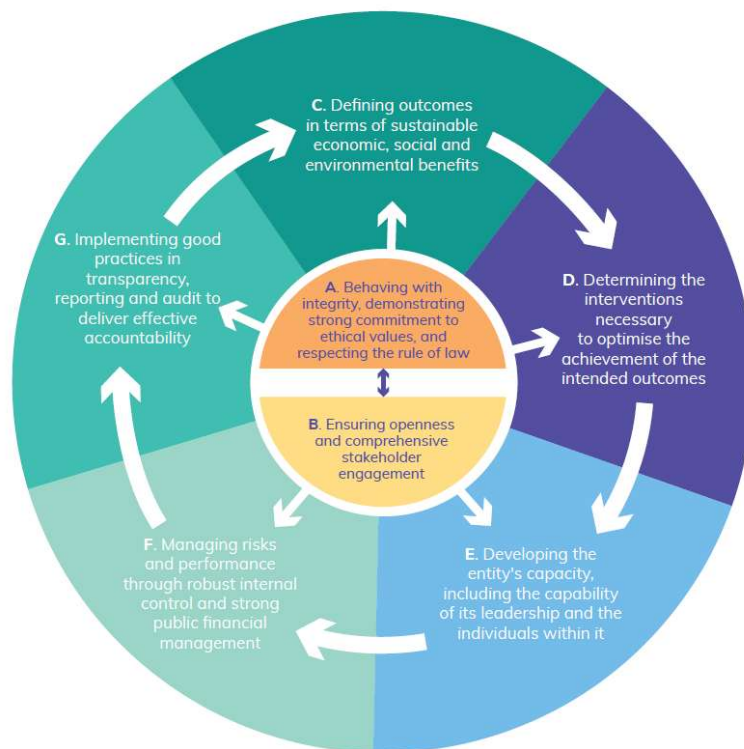
Braintree District Council Local Code of Corporate Governance

Introduction to Delivering Good Governance

The Council is committed to ensuring good governance principles and management practices are adopted in all its business activities to ensure public trust. This Local Code of Governance provides a public statement that sets out the way in which the Council will meet and demonstrate that commitment. It includes the political arrangements, administrative systems, policies, and processes as well as the culture and values that underpin arrangements

Delivering Good Governance in Local Government; Framework, jointly published by CIPFA and SOLACE¹ provides guidance on the standards for local authority governance in the UK. This Framework sets out seven core principles of governance as detailed in the diagram below, and illustrates that good governance is dynamic and involves continuous evaluation and review.

Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (CIPFA and Solace, 2016)



Braintree District Council has adopted these principles of good governance and adapted its Local Code. The overriding aims are to ensure that resources are directed in accordance with agreed policy and according to priorities; that there is sound and inclusive decision making; and there is clear accountability for the use of

¹ CIPFA: Chartered Institute for Public Finance & Accountancy; SOLACE: Society of Local Authority Chief Executives

those resources so that the desired outcomes for service users and communities are achieved.

The Council's key governance areas and how it will provide assurance that it is complying with these are set out in more detail within the overall governance framework, which includes the Constitution and Key Corporate Strategies and Policies:

[Council Constitution](#)

[Key Corporate Strategy documents](#)

The Council recognises that establishing and maintaining a culture of good governance is as important as putting in place a framework of policies and procedures. Members and officers are expected to uphold the highest standards of ethics, conduct and behaviour, and to act with openness, integrity, and accountability in carrying out their duties.

This Code ensures we are doing the right things, in the right way. Information regarding each of the seven core principles and the behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice are detailed below.

Where the Council works with partners and external suppliers, it expects that similar and proportionate oversight and assurance reporting arrangements will be in place.

Monitoring and Review

A local authority is required to conduct a review at least once a year of the effectiveness of its systems of internal control and include a statement reporting on the review with any published Statement of Accounts. This is known as the Annual Governance Statement.

As such governance arrangements are kept under review for their effectiveness in practice and so as to ensure that they are up to date and working effectively. The Head of Finance in conjunction with the Head of Governance will keep this Local Code under review to ensure that policies, procedures and working practices reflect best practice. This will include taking into consideration annual assessments such as the Internal Audit Annual Report and the External Auditor's Annual Report and review of arrangements over the use of resources.

On an annual basis, the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council will publish the Annual Governance Statement which will:

- Assess how the council has complied with this Code of Corporate Governance.
- Provide an opinion on the effectiveness of the Council's arrangements.
- Provide details of how continual improvement in the systems of governance will be achieved.

Governance Structure and Responsibilities

The Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consists of 49 Elected Members • Approves the Budget and Policy Framework • Approves the Constitution • Responsibility for regulatory functions and has a role holding the Cabinet to account
Cabinet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main decision-making body of the Council and exercise of executive functions • Comprises the Leader of the Council and 6 Cabinet Members, including Deputy Leader • Deputy Cabinet Members (non-voting) who are entitled to attend and participate in Cabinet debate
Governance & Audit Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides independent assurance to the Council on the adequacy and effectiveness of the risk management framework and control environment • To provide independent scrutiny of the Council's financial and non- financial performance to the extent that it affects the Council's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment and to oversee the financial reporting process • Responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of Member conduct • Review the Council's corporate governance arrangements against the good governance framework; and review the Annual Governance Statement prior to approval by the Cabinet • Approve the Annual Statement of Accounts and receive and consider reports of Internal and External Audit.
Corporate Scrutiny Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold the Cabinet and Officers to account and scrutinise performance • Responsible for undertaking the statutory call in function • To assist the Cabinet in the development of the Budget and Policy for approval by the Council
Head of Paid Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall corporate management and operational responsibility for the council and its employees • Determining and publicising a description of the overall structure of the Council showing the management structure and deployment of Officers • Report to the Council on the manner in which the discharge of the Council's functions is co-ordinated, the number and grade of officers required for the discharge of functions and the organisation of officers • Supporting other statutory officers
Section 151 Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The administration of the financial affairs of the Council and ensure maintenance of an efficient and effective internal audit function • To contribute to the corporate management of the Council through the provision of professional financial advice • Ensuring lawfulness and prudence of decision-making and administration of financial affairs • To provide advice on the scope of powers and authority to take decisions, maladministration, financial impropriety, probity and Budget and Policy Framework to all Councillors and will support and advise Councillors and Officers in their respective roles.
The Monitoring Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring, reviewing and maintaining the Constitution • Ensuring lawfulness of and fairness of decision-making • To contribute to the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct through the support of the Governance and Audit Committee and the Standards Sub-Committee • To be the Proper officer to receive complaints for the failure to comply with the Member Code of Conduct. • To be the Proper Officer for access to information • Providing advice on the scope of powers and authority to take decisions, maladministration, financial impropriety, probity and budget and policy framework issues to all Councillors and will support and advise Councillors and Officers in their respective roles.
Chief Audit Executive (Audit Manager)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides independent assurance and opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's risk management and control framework • Through the Internal Audit function delivers an annual programme of risk-based audits, including counter-fraud and investigation activity, and makes recommendations for improvement in the management of risk and control
Corporate Management Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the policy and budgetary framework and provides advice to Cabinet and the Council and Members • Develop service policy and arrangements for consideration and approval • Responsible for service delivery and performance in achieving the Council's Corporate Strategy and Annual Plan objectives

How the Council meets the seven core principles

The following details how the core principles are being met and the systems, policies and procedures in place to support this.

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

<p>Rationale: Local government organisations are accountable not only for how much they spend, but also for how they use the resources under their stewardship. This includes accountability for outputs, both positive and negative, and for the outcomes they have achieved.</p> <p>In addition, they have an overarching responsibility to serve the public interest in adhering to the requirements of legislation and government policies. It is essential that, as a whole, they can demonstrate the appropriateness of all their actions across all activities and have mechanisms in place to encourage and enforce adherence to ethical values and to respect the rule of law.</p>	<p>Our commitment to achieving good governance is demonstrated below:</p> <p>Behaving with integrity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical Framework (Codes of Conduct, Declarations of Interests and Gifts and Hospitality) is built on the Seven Principles of Public Life and sets out the standards of behaviour, conduct and values the council expects of its Members, Officers and those who work with the council. This together with promoting the framework ensures that high standards of conduct are maintained, and appropriate safeguards are put in place, with action taken where breaches occur. The Code of Conduct is included in Member and Officer inductions. • Constitution, Policy Framework and HR Policies create the conditions to enable Members and Officers to demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of the law, and adhere to relevant laws and regulations, allowing them to utilise powers for the benefit of the community. • Established procedure outlining arrangements for breaches of the Member Code of Conduct. • The Governance and Audit Committee is responsible for promoting and maintain high standards of Member conduct, and hearing and determining complaints through referral to the Standards Sub-Committee. • Standard decision making reporting format to ensure that all those responsible for taking decisions have the necessary information on which to do so. • Registers of Members' interests and records of gifts and hospitality are published on the Council's website. Officers are required to declare any gifts and hospitality offered and/ or received. • Members' declarations of interests are a standing item on all agendas. Minutes show declarations of interest were sought and appropriate declarations made. • Members appointed to represent the Council on Outside Bodies must respond to all reasonable requests for information about the work of the outside body and their participation in it. Where necessary this will be incorporated into reports to full Council. • A Corporate Complaints Policy is published on the Council's website. • Whistleblowing Policy demonstrates our commitment to review / investigate matters that may compromise our values or integrity in a confidential and proportionate manner.
--	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council has adopted an Organisational Vision supported by a statement of Values and Behaviours that we expect all our employees aim to at demonstrating within their work. <p>Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Constitution which sets out delegations of the Cabinet, committees and senior officers, and the decision making process to be applied. It also emphasises that the Council will act within the law. There is a Member/ and Officer protocol. Terms of Reference that exists for all committees and decision making meetings. Procurement Procedure Rules emphasise the expectation for parties involved to act with integrity and in compliance with the ethical standards expected by the Council. Many Council staff are also subject to the ethics of their professional body. A Grants Panel monitors the Councillor Community Grant Scheme, and Councillors are required to consider the Member Code of Conduct when making grant decisions. <p>Respecting the rule of law.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constitution outlines the roles and responsibilities of Members and Statutory Officers (Head of Paid Services, Monitoring Officer, and Section 151 Officer) in line with legislative and regulatory requirements. Appropriate policies and strategies exist and published: Counter Fraud Strategy; Fraud, Corruption and Dishonest Policy; Anti-Money Laundering Policy; Information Security Policy & Codes of Practice; and a Whistleblowing Policy. There is a fraud hotline for employees and customers to report irregularity and fraud.
--	--

Core Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

<p>Rationale: Local government is run for the public good; organisations therefore should ensure openness in their activities.</p> <p>Clear, trusted channels of communication and consultation should be used to engage effectively with all groups of stakeholders, such as individual citizens and service users, as well as institutional stakeholders.</p>	<p>Our commitment to achieving good governance is demonstrated below:</p> <p>Openness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Publication Scheme that describes the kinds of information available and provides guidance about how to access personal information and submit a Freedom of Information request. Publication Scheme and links are published on the website: Publication Scheme Adoption of a standard reporting format in relation to committee reports. Corporate Implications are included, as appropriate, in the standard report format which helps ensure that the decisions taken consider a range of potential impacts/risks. Where appropriate background papers are cited in the standard report format.
--	---

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agendas, reports and minutes are published on the Council's website. Meetings are open to the public unless they are considering exempt items. • Agendas include a set period for Public Question Time. • Future items for decision are published on the Council's website in a Decision Planner. Dates for submitting, publishing and distributing timely reports are set. • Urgent decisions not included in the Decision Planner must be agreed with the Chairman of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the Access to Information Procedure Rules. • Delegated decisions and contract awards are appropriately evidenced, recorded and published. • Awards of Councillor Community Grants are published for all each Member. • Webcasts of Council, Cabinet and other public meetings are broadcasted live and retained for later viewing via the Council's website. • Time is allocated so that Members can ask the Leader and Cabinet questions at full Council. The Constitution provides for Motions to be formally requested for debate. • We publish a comprehensive set of information in line with the requirements of the Transparency Code. Finance & Transparency <p>Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Digital Strategy which sets out how we use a variety of channels to deliver services to, and interact with, customers (Digital Customer). • The Council adopts both a formal and informal approach to joint working and engaging with the voluntary and community sector across the district. • The Council is involved in a range of outside bodies where its participation contributes to the Council's strategic functions, priorities, or community leadership roles; supports partnerships and joint working; and enables Members to gain and share knowledge and expertise. The Leader of the Council makes executive appointments; full Council makes other appointments. <p>Engaging stakeholders effectively including individual citizens and service users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council seeks the views from individuals, organisations and businesses on a range of topics. The Council has a People's Panel. Links to current consultations are published on our website: Consultations and a dedicated digital platform for community engagement processes is used for ideas collection, voting, discussing, surveys and polls. Consultation and Engagement • Consultation activity is reviewed to evaluate how well each consultation exercise met its planned objectives.
--	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has published Statement of Community Involvement which sets out how and when the Council will involve local communities in the planning system, together with a description of the types of involvement that will be used. Statement of Community Involvement • The Council has arrangements to engage with all sections of the community including hard to reach groups. • Use of social media to increase interaction and engagement with customers: Social Media Policy and links at Social Media • Satisfaction surveys are undertaken by services. • Local Councillors are elected by the community and to represent public interest as well as individuals living within their ward. • Contact publication – communicates the Council’s vision and priorities and is published twice a year and sent to all households in the District. • e-mail newsletters incorporating news, information and events are sent on an ad hoc basis to those residents requesting this service.
--	---

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

<p>Rationale: The long-term nature and impact of many of local government’s responsibilities mean that it should define and plan outcomes and that these should be sustainable. Decisions should further the organisation’s purpose, contribute to intended benefits and outcomes, and remain within the limits of authority and resources.</p> <p>Input from all groups of stakeholders, including citizens, service users, and institutional stakeholders, is vital to the success of this process and in balancing competing demands when determining priorities for the finite resources available.</p>	<p>Our commitment to achieving good governance is demonstrated below:</p> <p>Defining Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Corporate Strategy is maintained supported by an Annual Plan which set out the Council’s vision and priorities together with its aims and actions. • Medium-Term Financial Strategy covers a rolling four-year period and is updated and agreed annually as part of the budget process. • Annual Business Plans form a key part of delivering the Council’s overall vision and used to set individual performance objectives. • Management Board, Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees receive performance monitoring reports at regular intervals. <p>Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Local Plan that was adopted in 2022 which provides a vision and planning framework for how the district will develop and grow up to 2033. The Plan is currently being reviewed taking into account changes in the National Planning Policy Framework. • Climate Change Strategy has been approved which sets out our objectives and a framework for local action on climate change and energy. • The Council declared, in July 2019, a “Climate Emergency” with an aim to make Braintree District Council activities, as far as practical, carbon neutral by 2030. A Climate Change
--	--

	<p>Action Plan is agreed annually to support progress towards being carbon neutral by 2030.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of the North Essex Economic Board to deliver through partnership of councils across mid- and North Essex to make areas more prosperous. • Working as part of North Essex Councils (NEC) for enhanced cooperation across the nine constituent authorities to achieve better outcomes by working together to influence and secure collaboration and investment that will help areas to flourish and realise their full economic, social and environmental potential. • A standard report and decision template which captures how decisions will contribute to achieving our Corporate Strategy. Where appropriate, all decisions are to include an Equalities Impact Assessment. • The Asset Management Framework including Policy and Strategy, underpinned by an Asset Management Plan ensuring that the wide range of land and property assets is best used in the delivery of services and to support our corporate priorities.
--	--

Core Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

<p>Rationale: Local government achieves its intended outcomes by providing a mixture of legal, regulatory, and practical interventions (courses of action).</p> <p>Determining the right mix of these courses of action is a critically important strategic choice that local government has to make to ensure intended outcomes are achieved.</p> <p>They need robust decision making mechanisms to ensure that their defined outcomes can be achieved in a way that provides the best trade-off between the various types of resource inputs while still enabling effective and efficient operations. Decisions made need to be reviewed frequently to ensure that achievement of outcomes is optimised.</p>	<p>Braintree District Council's commitment to achieving good governance is demonstrated below:</p> <p>Determining interventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A financial planning and budgetary process that determines level of resources to achieve Council priorities and outcomes and meet statutory duties. • The format of decision making reports to ensure that all relevant information is considered such as analysis of options, resource implications and consultation feedback. Options are clearly defined and analysed to ensure decisions are based on the best possible information. • All Cabinet reports and Delegated Decisions are reviewed by key officers, including Legal, Finance, and HR. <p>Planning interventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Strategy setting out high-level ambitions and priorities for 2024 to 2028. • An Annual Plan is agreed which sets out the projects and initiatives to be delivered over a 12-month period that will contribute to achieving the priorities of the Corporate Strategy as well as details of how progress will be monitored and the key performance indicators measured. • Business Plans for each service area, these include clear identification of objectives and targets, reflect Corporate Strategy priorities and include the identification of risks to meeting the objectives. They are updated annually and incorporate the financial plans for the period ahead for the service areas. • The Medium-Term Financial Strategy and Capital Investment Strategy identify how resources are being used to meeting priorities.
---	---

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risks associated with partnership and joint working arrangements are identified and recorded in risk registers. • Financial management and reporting processes that enable regular and timely reporting to budget-holders, Management Board, Cabinet, Corporate Scrutiny Committee, and the Governance & Audit Committee. • Key performance indicators and key actions are determined annually and monitored via the Pentana Performance Management system. • Agile Working Policy to enable employees to work in a more agile and flexible way to respond to business needs while promoting a positive work-life balance. <p>Optimising achievement of intended outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The annual budget is prepared in line with agreed priorities and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. The Council publishes its Financial Strategy annually to set an indicative four year financial plan to fit the longer term strategic vision as well as a detailed one year budget. This is intended to include realistic estimates of revenue and capital – expenditure and income. • We value feedback in the form of Comments, Compliments or Complaints to help improve the customer experience help shape the design, delivery and continuous improvement of our services. • A Corporate Policy Development Committee is able to conduct reviews of policy, services and aspects of services, and to make recommendations to the Cabinet. • Our Corporate Business Continuity Plan (BCP) supported by bespoke service BCPs ensure the resilience of the council to any eventuality and to help continuity of services. Emergency Planning processes are in place to allow a response to an external incident as part our duties under the Civil Contingencies Act.
--	--

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

<p>Rationale: Local government needs appropriate structures and leadership, as well as people with the right skills, appropriate qualifications and mind-set, to operate efficiently and effectively and achieve intended outcomes within the specified periods.</p> <p>A local government organisation must ensure that it has both the capacity to fulfil its own mandate and to make certain that there</p>	<p>Our commitment to achieving good governance is demonstrated below:</p> <p>Developing the entity's capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Business Plans include Workforce Planning. • Arrangements are in place for regular staff engagement and briefings, for example, Huddles, Tea@3, Managers' Conferences, Your Voice Forum. • The Council actively promotes the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working to enhance capacity. Current examples include the Essex Procurement Partnership, Shared Payroll Service, shared roles for the North Essex Economic Board and North Essex Councils. The Council is also a member of the North Essex Parking Partnership. <p>Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals</p>
---	--

<p>are policies in place to guarantee that its management has the operational capacity for the organisation as a whole. Because both individuals and the environment in which an organisation operates will change over time, there will be a continuous need to develop its capacity as well as the skills and experience of individual staff members.</p> <p>Leadership in local government is strengthened by the participation of people with many different types of backgrounds, reflecting the structure and diversity of communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Protocol on Member/Officer Relations that assists both Members and officers achieve good working relationships in the conduct of Council business. • A Scheme of Delegation that is reviewed in light of legal and organisational changes. • A Constitution that sets out financial management arrangements through the Financial Procedure Rules, along with and Procurement Procedure Rules. • Revisions and updates to the Constitution are agreed by Full Council having been considered by the Governance and Audit Committee. • The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Members are assigned specific areas of responsibility and are supported in their functions by Deputy Cabinet Members. • Management Board, Heads of Services and other Senior Officers regularly hold briefings with Cabinet Members, and collectively through a Joint Executive Team. • Annual Member Development programme where . Members are updated on major service, legal and policy changes as required. There is a Cabinet sub-committee, the Member Development Working Group. Member training history is published alongside individual Member details. • All Members appointed to the Planning Committee, or the Licensing Committee (including any nominated substitutes) are required to undertake mandatory training before undertaking their duties and dealing with the business of the relevant committee. • Mandatory Induction programmes for all employees. • Manager Competencies and agreed Values and Behaviours for all staff to support the Council's core values. • Performance Management Framework used to agree individual objectives and development needs and supported by regular 1-2-1s. • Performance Management Scheme for Management Board incorporating formal Member panel input comprising the Leader of the Council, appropriate Cabinet Members, and the Chairman of Corporate Scrutiny. • The Council promotes and encourages apprenticeships across all levels offering training, skills and experience. • Agile and Flexible Working Policy and Guidance. • Health and Safety policies designed to protect and enhance the welfare of staff are actively promoted and monitored. • Digital Strategy that aims to provide Members and Officers with technology to support them in efficiently and effectively performing their role. • The Organisation Development and Learning Team ensure an appropriate programme of training and development is available for all employees. • The Council's Pay Policy provides for responsive remuneration to recognise where recruitment and retention is difficult to maintain capacity and relevant skills and experience.
---	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory learning for all staff including an annual refresher on: Code of Conduct, Data Protection, Diversity and Equality, Fire Safety, Information Security, Health & Safety, and Safeguarding. • The Monitoring Officer provides training to Members and Officers on the application of the Constitution.
Core Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management	
<p>Rationale: Local government needs to ensure that the organisations and governance structures that it oversees have implemented, and can sustain, an effective performance management system that facilitates effective and efficient delivery of planned services.</p> <p>Risk management and internal control are important and integral parts of a performance management system and are crucial to the achievement of outcomes. Risk should be considered and addressed as part of all decision making activities.</p> <p>A strong system of financial management is essential for the implementation of policies and the achievement of intended outcomes, as it will enforce financial discipline, strategic allocation of resources, efficient service delivery and accountability.</p> <p>It is also essential that a culture and structure for scrutiny are in place as a key part of accountable decision making, policy making and review. A positive working culture that accepts, promotes and encourages constructive challenge is critical to</p>	<p>Our commitment to achieving good governance is demonstrated below:</p> <p>Managing risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk management arrangements that are embedded across all service areas and help inform decision making. • The Council's Risk Management Policy and Strategy recognises that risk management is an integral part of the operation of the council and is considered in all aspects of management processes. These include policy and decision-making, service delivery planning, project and change management, revenue and capital budget management and partnership working. • Strategic risks are regularly reviewed and are detailed in the Strategic Risk Register. • Service Business Plans include operational risks identified annually by Heads of Service. • The Cabinet approves the Strategic Risk Register, and the Governance and Audit Committee oversees the effectiveness of risk management arrangements and provides assurance to the Council in this respect. • Management Action Plans are provided for those risks which have a high risk rating and include details of the responsible officer. • Senior Managers are responsible for putting in place an appropriate control environment to manage risks inherent in their services and to provide assurance on an annual basis. • Health & Safety Policy supported by a strategy and framework that seek to develop and maintain an environment and workplace culture that has a clear focus and commitment to health, safety, and wellbeing of all those engaged in, or interacting with council activities. • Safeguarding Policy supported by appropriate procedures to ensure an overarching approach towards safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults. <p>Managing performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Board, Cabinet, and the Corporate Scrutiny Committee receive performance monitoring reports at regular intervals. • Key performance indicators and key actions are determined annually and monitored via the Pentana Performance Management system.

<p>successful scrutiny and successful service delivery. Importantly, this culture does not happen automatically, it requires repeated public commitment from those in authority.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports and minutes and decisions under member consideration are published on the website. • The decision-making process is scrutinised by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee which has the power to call-in decisions. Specific meetings of the Committee are held in November and then January for Members (in public) to scrutinise the proposed Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy. • The Corporate Policy Development Committee is able to conduct reviews of policy, services and aspects of services, and to make suggestions on either the development of policies, or suggest new policies, where appropriate. • Agenda and minutes of the Corporate Scrutiny and Corporate Policy Committees and any associated reports with recommendations to the Cabinet are published on the Council's website. • Procurement Procedure Rules and Financial Procedure Rules to ensure that processes operate consistently. • An effective internal audit service is resourced and maintained and works to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. Internal Audit prepares and delivers a risk based audit plan in line with international auditing standards which is kept under review to reflect changing priorities and emerging risks. • Programme and Project Management Framework guides the council on project life cycle and sets out how key corporate programmes and service projects will be managed, supported by a Programme Management Office • A Programme and Project Assurance Team (PPAT) which meets regularly to review progress, risks, and issues relating to the delivery of major capital projects. Each project has its own project risks and issues tracker and Budget Monitoring Tool. • Capital Programme Board provides strategic direction, leadership, and challenge to ensure the effective development and delivery of the Capital Programme in line with the Council's strategies and priorities. • Investment & Development Programme Board provides strategic direction, leadership, and challenge to those activities and programmes aimed at delivering a balanced budget through the Fit-of the-Future Transformation Programme and its different workstreams. <p>Robust internal control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's system of internal financial control is based on a framework of procedural rules, regular management information, administrative procedures (including segregation of duties), management supervision, and a system of delegation of accountability. • An annual report is produced by the Chief Audit Executive which provides an opinion on the Council's control environment, and a self-assessment of the Internal Audit function against the public sector internal audit standards and CIPFA's guide to the role of the Head of Internal Audit.
--	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counter Fraud Strategy which reflects a proactive and integrated approach to preventing and tackling fraud and which is subject to review and is approved by the Governance and Audit Committee. • An Anti-Fraud, Corruption and Dishonesty Policy which includes a number of procedures which are aimed at the prevention of, or to frustrate any attempted fraudulent, corrupt or dishonest act. • Annual Governance Statement (AGS) that provides a summary of how the Council is meeting the principles of good governance. The AGS is subject to review by the Governance and Audit Committee before approval by the Cabinet. • The Governance and Audit Committee, which is independent of Cabinet, oversees the management of governance issues, internal controls and risk management reporting. Its performance is subject to annual self-assessment. • The Governance and Audit Committee's Terms of Reference are reviewed and revised to reflect professional bodies' expectations and best practice. • Training is provided to Governance and Audit Committee Members on areas relevant to their role. • The council is subject to External Audit and inspection regimes which require action plans that are assigned to officers. <p>Managing data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's Information Security Policy and Codes of Practice provide guidance on the arrangements that must be in place to ensure personal data is kept protected and secure. • The Governance and Audit Committee receives detail of compliance with the Information Security policy in the Audit, Insurance and Fraud Manager's annual report. • The Data Quality Policy sets out the Council's approach to data quality in relation to non-financial performance data to ensure that high standards are clearly set, achieved and maintained. Data Quality Policy • Effective information sharing is undertaken in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation. • Data subjects are informed why their personal information is being collected and how it will be processed (including when shared with other bodies) through the Council's overall Privacy Notices published on our website and individual Privacy Statements on forms, in booklets etc. Privacy Policy • Information Sharing Agreements, are reviewed on a regular basis, are in place to document the sharing of information. • Data verification and validation processes are integrated within systems and processes. • Public Services Network (PSN) Code of Connection. <p>Strong public financial management</p>
--	---

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective financial management arrangements exist across the council which supports the achievement of the council's ambitions and service delivery. • Adherence to the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government, and key requirements of the Financial Management Code. • The Section 151 Officer reports annually to full Council as part of the budget process on the robustness of the estimates made and the adequacy of financial reserves. • Procurement Procedure Rules and Financial Procedure Rules set out the Council's arrangements and ensure that processes operate consistently. • Medium-Term Financial Strategy covering a four-year period reviewed and updated annually. • Financial performance is reported quarterly to Cabinet and the Corporate Scrutiny Committee. • The Statement of Accounts are prepared in accordance with legislation and professional codes of practice and subject to external audit review. • Governance and Audit Committee receive a suite of key financial indicators along with the quarterly financial performance.
--	--

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

<p>Rationale: Accountability is about ensuring that those making decisions and delivering services are answerable for them. Effective accountability is concerned not only with reporting on actions completed but also ensuring that stakeholders are able to understand and respond as the organisation plans and carries out its activities in a transparent manner.</p> <p>Both external and internal audit contribute to effective accountability.</p>	<p>Our commitment to achieving good governance is demonstrated below:</p> <p>Implementing good practice in transparency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Publication Scheme that describes the kinds of information available and provides guidance about how to access personal information and submit a Freedom of Information request. Publication Scheme • Agendas, reports and minutes are published on the Council's website. • Details of Council spending with suppliers, value in excess of £250, are published monthly on the Council's website. A register of the Council's contracts is also available on the Council's website. • Details of senior managers' remuneration and Member's allowances and expenses are published annually in the Council's Statement of Accounts. Statements of Accounts • A range of other information is published in accordance with the Transparency Code. • A period of public inspection is conducted following publication of the Council's draft Statement of Accounts. Interested persons can raise questions with the External Auditor. • Decision Planner (including Forward Plan) is published on the council's website (printed copies are made available) providing details of upcoming Key and Non-Key Decisions. Where an urgent Key Decision has been made this is published separately.
--	--

	<p>Implementing good practices in reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Financial Statements are compiled and published in line with statutory requirements and the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounts. • Annual Governance Statement produced. <p>Assurance and effective accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Local Code of Corporate Governance sets out the governance framework and the results of the annual review of the effectiveness of those arrangements are reported in the Annual Governance Statement. • An effective internal audit service is resourced and maintained. The Service has direct access to members and provides assurance on governance arrangements via an annual report containing an opinion on the Council's internal control arrangements. • External Audit provides an annual opinion on the Council's financial statements and arrangements for securing Value for Money. • The Council actively welcomes peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies. • The Council will respond to the findings and recommendations of internal audit, external audit, corporate scrutiny committees, and other inspection bodies. • Executive Key Decisions can be subject to 'call-in'. • The respective roles of officers and associated responsibilities are set out in the Constitution. • The Monitoring Officer provides the Governance and Audit Committee with an annual report on the functioning of the Members' Standards Framework.
--	--