

STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE – 8 JULY 2021

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2020-21

Executive Summary

The Annual Governance Statement demonstrates the effectiveness of the Council's corporate governance environment and incorporates the statement on internal control (SIC) requirements to demonstrate the Council has appropriate internal control mechanisms in place.

The evaluation of governance arrangements is based around the CIPFA/SOLACE governance framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' which brings together an underlying set of legislative requirements, governance principles and management processes relating to the whole organisation.

The framework has seven core principles of governance focusing on the arrangements, systems and processes for the direction and control of the organisation and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and, where applicable, leads the community.

To assist in the assessment process CIPFA has produced a detailed matrix of questions for the statement in accordance with the framework's governance principles. This matrix has been used as the basis for the governance analysis attached at Appendix 2.

Arising from the assessment is a requirement to produce a Governance Statement and action plan to correct any identified problems in the governance arrangements. The Draft Governance Statement is attached at Appendix 1. The statement will be published separately on the internet as well as forming part of the Statement of Accounts.

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to:

RESOLVE That the Draft Annual Governance Statement be received.

The Committee has the authority to determine the recommendation(s) set out above.

Background Papers: None.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council conducts its business within a governance framework. It is an interrelated system that brings together an underlying set of legislative requirements, governance principles and management processes.
- 1.2 Documents and processes that provide some of the boundaries to this governance framework include:
 - The Constitution;
 - Local and statutory Codes of practice, Policies and Strategies;
 - Management Arrangements and Scheme of Delegations;
 - Service and Performance Plans;
 - Performance Management Systems; and
 - Internal Control Processes.
- 1.3 In essence, the Annual Governance Statement is a formal statement that recognises, records and publishes an authority's governance arrangements as defined in the framework.
- 1.4 The Annual Governance Statement documents the corporate governance environment.
- 1.5 The CIPFA/SOLACE governance framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' brings together an underlying set of legislative requirements, governance principles and management processes relating to the whole organisation and sets out the fundamental principles of corporate governance. These are contained in 7 core principles.
- 1.6 To assist in the assessment process CIPFA has produced a detailed matrix of questions for the statement in accordance with the framework's governance principles. This matrix has been used as the basis for the governance assessment attached at Appendix 2.

2.0 Implications

Financial and Risk

- 2.1 There are no financial implications of this work. The development of risk management and business continuity is an ongoing improvement for the Council.

Equalities and Human Resources

- 2.2 Ongoing training will be provided in order to ensure compliance with the governance and assurance framework.

Legal

- 2.3 The CIPFA/SOLACE governance framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' brings together an underlying set of legislative requirements, governance principles and management processes for the Council, which are documented in the Annual Governance Statement.

3.0 Corporate Plan

3.1 The assessment forms a part of the Annual Statement of Accounts and contributes to ensuring the effective use of resources by the Council, as one of the objectives of the Corporate Plan.

4.0 Engagement and Consultation

4.1 None.

REPORT ENDS

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2020/21

1. Scope of Responsibility

Woking Borough Council (The Authority) 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 Authority also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement 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 Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk and the system of internal control.

The Authority has approved and adopted arrangements for corporate governance, which are consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*. The framework consists of 7 core principles each with sub principles. These are considered in more detail in section 4.

This statement explains how the Authority meets the requirements of Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015, regulation 6(1)(a), which requires all relevant bodies to conduct a review at least once in a year of the effectiveness of its system of internal control and include a statement reporting on the review with any published Statement of Accounts. This Statement is prepared in accordance with proper practices in relation to accounts.

2. The purpose of the governance framework

Governance comprises the arrangements put in place to ensure that the intended outcomes for stakeholders are defined and achieved. To deliver good governance in the public sector, governing bodies and individuals working for public sector entities must try to achieve their entity's objectives while acting in the public interest at all times.

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, culture and values, by which the Authority is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost effective services.

The quality of governance arrangements underpins the levels of trust in public services and is therefore fundamental to the Authority's relationship to customers and residents. Trust in public services is also influenced by the quality of services received and also by how open and honest an Authority is about its activities.

A framework for the implementation of good governance allows the Authority to be clear about its approach to discharging its responsibilities and to promote this internally, to officers and members and externally to partners, stakeholders and residents.

The arrangements required for gathering assurances for the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement provide an opportunity for the Authority to consider the robustness of the governance arrangements in place and to consider this as a corporate issue that affects all parts of the Authority. It also helps to highlight those areas where improvement is required which are contained in the improvement plan.

The governance framework has been in place at the Authority for the year ended 31 March 2021 and up to the date of approval of the annual report and statement of accounts.

The key elements of the systems and processes that comprise the Authority's governance arrangements are documented in a detailed supporting analysis. The Authority has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework.

The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the Corporate Leadership Team and Senior Managers within the Authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Head of Internal Audit's Annual Report, and by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates. The Corporate Leadership Team review the arrangements and provide an assurance that the Authority is operating within local and statutory frameworks and have approved this statement.

3. Covid-19

The national lockdown as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic in March 2020 required the Council to review the governance framework in particular in the context of remote working.

The government enacted the Coronavirus Act 2020 and issued two regulations relevant to the Council; one to cancel elections until May 2021 and the other to change meeting arrangements to enable virtual meetings.

In April 2020 an Addendum to the Constitution was agreed by the Group Leaders. This covered the arrangements for virtual meetings including:

- Papers for meetings published electronically;
- Speaking arrangements and time limits;
- Voting;
- Timescales for Questions to Council and Answers; and
- Public Speaking at Planning Committee

As a result of the cancellation of elections, all appointments remained in place for a further year, this applied to membership and roles of the Executive, Committees, Task Groups and Working Groups, as well as all appointments to external bodies. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor also remained in office for another year.

The Borough Emergency Control Centre was set up to manage the Council's response to the pandemic and was in place throughout 2020/21.

Since May 2021 the government no longer allows virtual meetings and Council, Executive and other Committees have returned to the Council Chamber with appropriate social distancing measures in place. Task Groups and Working Groups continue to be held virtually.

4. The Governance Framework

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

There is a comprehensive staff handbook and Behaviour and Skills Framework setting out the Authority's expectations regarding behaviour and the procedures for non-compliance. Staff are made aware, through induction and the performance management framework, of the Authority's expectations in terms of standards of behaviour and compliance with agreed policies and codes of conduct.

The Council has a Code of Conduct for Employees. During the year an Officer Conflicts of Interest Protocol was introduced which brings together controls on Officers' conflicts of interest contained in the Local Government Act 1972, Officer Employment Rules and the Code of Conduct. There is also a Members' Code of Conduct which sets out the standards of behaviour to be followed by Members. Both codes take into account 'The Seven Principles of Public Life' which are included in the Localism Act 2011. The principles are: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

In April 2021 the Council adopted the Local Government Association's Model Code of Conduct as revised during the year. The Code applies to all means of communications, including the use of social media. The most significant change to the Code was the extension of the disclosure of pecuniary interests to cover unpaid directorships. The change had implications for Woking Borough Council Members appointed to Council-owned companies. In order to avoid such members being prevented from participating fully in Council business, it was proposed that a dispensation would be made for those Members, the details to be recorded in the Register of Members Interests which was open for inspection.

The Authority is clear about its leadership responsibilities for services, whether provided directly, through partners or third parties. We work closely with partners and influence third parties to make sure they deliver to agreed levels of quality and are accountable for what they do.

We have a clear commitment to ensure services deliver an appropriate combination of quality, value and choice to the community.

There is a complaints procedure which provides for a response from the service manager and allows for the complainant to appeal. Complainants are advised of their right to refer the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman, Housing Ombudsman or Information Commissioner as appropriate. This is publicised in the offices and on the Council website.

Complaints submitted under the Members Code of Conduct are reported to the Standards and Audit Committee which also receives regular reports on complaints which have been referred to the Ombudsman. There is a protocol for dealing with complaints made by Members against other Members.

A report on complaints received by the Council is received by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Scheme of Delegation within the Constitution requires Members and Officers to ensure that all decisions are compliant with policies, procedures, laws and regulations. The key documents within the Governance and Policy Framework are maintained and regularly reviewed including the Constitution itself.

Principle B – Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

The Council's Vision and Values have been developed with the three pillars of People Place and Us to provide clarity on the role and priorities of the Authority in relation to its residents and partners/stakeholders.

In February 2021 the Council adopted a Corporate Plan for 2021/22 and will develop a 5 year Corporate Strategy for 2022-2027 following engagement with residents during 2021.

The Constitution clearly defines the purpose of community leadership, effective scrutiny, and public accountability in terms of roles and responsibilities and functions. The Authority is committed to openness and acting in the public interest.

Woking Joint Committee is a committee between Woking Borough Council and Surrey County Council and makes decisions on certain services, monitors the effectiveness of public services, partnerships and joint initiatives. Local people are encouraged to take part. Members represent the Authority working formally and informally with voluntary groups.

The Council is the ultimate decision-making body and the principal forum for political debate. The Council sets the Policies and Strategies for the Authority and appoints the Leader of the Council, who then determines the appointment of the Deputy Leader and the members of the Executive.

The Executive acts within the approved policy framework and budget and leads preparation of new policies and budget. Each member of the Executive has a portfolio of work for which they take responsibility. The Authority also has an Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewing Executive decisions, Council Services and other services in the Borough that affect the community of Woking. The other responsibilities of the Authority are discharged through its non-executive committees and the Standards and Audit Committee.

A confidentiality protocol was adopted by the Council in October 2020. This covers occasions where the Council is involved in a transaction which would require confidentiality in order to protect the interests of the Council or the party the Council is dealing with. The protocol also introduced new arrangements for recording and reviewing any confidentiality clauses within contracts, and non-disclosure agreements.

In July 2019 the Council established the Governance Review Task Group. This group is reviewing the governance and committee structure at the Council and whether it would be beneficial to change the existing governance structure.

Formal meetings of the Council, Executive, Overview and Scrutiny, Planning, Licensing and Standards and Audit Committees are webcast and recordings are available afterwards to view through the website.

The Constitution provides for members of the public to ask questions of the Executive at the Executive meeting. Petitions may also be put to the Council with the Constitution setting out how these are considered depending on the number of signatures. Members of the public may also ask questions at the Joint Committee.

Public consultations have been undertaken on specific matters affecting the community. The Council is committed to enhancing public engagement and has launched a new residents' panel which will help shape the Borough's future, by acting as a sounding board for future initiatives. The new Community Forum technology introduced in June 2021 will facilitate engagement and a wide range of consultations during 2021.

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

The Council adopted a Corporate Plan in February 2021 which reflects the key priorities and strategies already in place:

The Core Strategy, adopted in October 2012, sets out the vision for Woking to 2027. The strategy has been communicated widely internally to local partners and to the wider community through interest groups. It is also available on our website.

The Authority's Climate Change Strategy, Woking 2050, balances our environmental aspirations with the Borough's needs for development and economic prosperity. The aim of the strategy is to coordinate a wide range of objectives which can be used by the Council and Woking's residents, businesses, community groups and others to reduce the Borough's impact on the environment.

The Authority has also prepared Natural Woking, a biodiversity and green infrastructure strategy for the area. This seeks positive outcomes for habitats and people, by enhancing provision and accessibility to green spaces; conserving appropriate existing biodiversity and habitats; and creating opportunities for species to return to the Borough.

The Economic Development Strategy was approved by Council in April 2017 and covers the period to 2022 while considering the vision to 2050. The Strategy's objectives are to encourage business development growth and inward investment in the Borough. Additionally, the Strategy supports the creation of jobs, stimulating the economy, as well as generating income for the Council (to support service provision). A Framework for Recovery in response to the pandemic was approved and implemented in 2020 and an update against the agreed action plan reported in March 2021.

The Council approved the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy in February 2021 following consultation during the year. Consultation on the Housing Strategy has been completed during May and June 2021 and the final Strategy, reflecting direction and priorities for the future, will be adopted by Council during 2021/22.

Capital and Investment and Treasury Management Strategies are approved annually. These provide details on the overall approach to the capital programme including explaining the purpose of the Council investment.

The Council is undertaking a programme of engagement with residents and stakeholders during 2021/22 to establish the Corporate Strategy for 2022-2027.

The Authority has been able to protect services in recent years, seeking to achieve efficiencies and increase income generation where there have been budget pressures. In the post-lockdown economic environment it will be necessary to revisit this strategy and explore operational efficiencies, learning from others and embracing digital innovation wherever possible. The Corporate Strategy will identify priority areas to align resources and service focus.

The Performance Framework is owned by Members and officers. The content is communicated to a wide audience in order to ensure that these key priorities are understood and translated into operational outcomes, and it is available via the Authority's website.

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

A Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is prepared on at least an annual basis and updated as circumstances change. It is linked to the annual budget and service strategies. During 2020/21 the focus of the Council was in supporting the community in response to the pandemic.

The MTFS was updated in March 2021 and recognised that the Covid-19 crisis has caused significant financial uncertainty. During 2021/22 there will be regular detailed reporting of the strategy to establish a sustainable future plan

Annual Service planning is closely aligned to the budgeting process and identifies service developments and the associated financial impacts. Key performance indicators are set and monitored during the year.

The Authority is proactive in working together with partners and considering the most effective way for services to be provided within the community, whether that be by the Council direct or through third parties.

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

The Performance and Development Review process is embedded in the Authority with annual assessments completed by all officers. The process incorporates the Council’s Behaviour and Skills framework and helps to determine the Learning and Development programme.

The Authority was assessed by Investors in People during 2019/20. The Authority retained an accreditation at the ‘Silver’ level and also received the Health and Wellbeing Good Practice Award.

A programme of management development was introduced following the 2015 Peer Review to support future leaders and succession planning. This programme continued to be extended to further staff during 2020/21.

There is a comprehensive training programme for Members. The Council’s commitment to Member development was first comprehensively assessed by South East Employers in 2008. Since then Woking has successfully maintained Charter status for Elected Member Development, achieving reaccreditation every three years. The Council was assessed for reaccreditation in 2018 and was again awarded the Charter.

The Council reviews its programme for Member Development annually and has developed a comprehensive learning and Development Framework together with the Roles and Responsibilities of Elected Members. The programme includes Mandatory Member training.

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

The system of internal control is a part of the governance 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 the Authority'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.

Formal Risk Management arrangements provide for risk identification, analysis, ownership and mitigating actions. An annual risk report is provided to the Executive. The Corporate Leadership Team review the Strategic Risk Register. Committee reports identify and quantify risks associated with a proposal. The system of internal financial control is based upon a framework of comprehensive financial regulations and procedures (within the Constitution), which comply with the CIPFA "Good Practice Guide for Financial Regulations in a modern English Council". Control is maintained through regular management information, management supervision, and a structure of delegation and accountability. The Council has an anti-fraud and corruption policy and whistle blowing policy which are updated and promoted internally regularly.

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

The Authority annually reviews the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review is informed by the managers who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance processes, Internal Audit reviews and by comments made by the external auditor and other review agencies and inspectorates.

In November 2019 the Council invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to undertake a Corporate Peer Challenge to assess progress since the 2015 review. The LGA made a series of recommendations and the Council's proposals to address these were considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Executive in July 2020.

The Council also engaged independent external support to review the processes and actions relating to the Woking Football Club and Associated Developments project. The resulting recommendations were all accepted by the Council and their implementation is being monitored.

The Council's Internal Audit Service carries out a programme of independent reviews. Their work is based around the core risks faced by the Council and includes work on financial and non-financial systems, corporate programmes and partnerships. This includes adherence to established policies, procedures, laws and regulations.

These findings are brought together within this Annual Governance Statement and are reported annually to the Standards and Audit Committee which undertakes the functions of an audit committee, as identified in CIPFA's *Audit Committee – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities* and has responsibility for receipt of the Annual Governance Statement.

The Overview and Scrutiny function provides the scope to focus on issues that have the widest impact on the community and not just services directly provided by the Authority.

Monthly performance and financial monitoring information is published, including details on treasury management and group company activities.

Accessible data is available online where detailed information is published in accordance with transparency requirements.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The Authority has approved a Constitution which defines and documents the roles and responsibilities of the Authority, Executive, Overview and Scrutiny and officer functions, with clear delegation arrangements and protocols for decision making and communication and codes of conduct defining the standards of behaviour for Members and staff. Delegations are recorded in accordance with the relevant Regulations.

The Thameswey Group of companies has been established by the Authority to assist in the delivery of the Council's strategic objectives with a view to securing benefits for the residents of the Borough. The Council, and the Boards of the Thameswey group of companies, have approved a set of protocols designed to make the activities of the companies open and transparent in the context of the commercial environment in which the companies operate.

In July 2020 the Council adopted a Standards Protocol covering Members' access to confidential information of Council-owned companies. The protocol, which is subject to the Members' Code of Conduct, enables all Members to receive information produced by the Thameswey Group.

Independent Directors play a key role in the Governance of the Companies. Recognising the high level of activity and increasing scale of the business, the Council approved an increase in the number of Independent Directors and formalised the period of service having regard to best practice.

The Group Business Plans are approved by the Council annually. Group Company information is included in the monthly performance and financial monitoring information (Green Book).

The senior management of the Authority is structured to provide clear responsibility and accountability at both strategic (Corporate Leadership Team, CLT) and operational (Senior Manager) levels. The structure reflects the Authority's values and approach with management and services grouped by 'People', 'Place' and 'Us'.

The CLT during 2020/21 comprised the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Housing, Director of Neighbourhood Services, Director of Community Services, Finance Director (nominated in accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972) and the Director of Democratic and Legal Services. Each had allocated responsibilities to ensure a clear chain for decision-making and actions to implement those responsibilities. The Chief Executive is the Head of Paid Service under the terms of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989. The Director of Democratic and Legal Services is the designated Monitoring Officer and is responsible for ensuring that the Authority acts in accordance with the Constitution.

The former Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive retired on 31 March 2021 and were replaced in April 2021 by the current Chief Executive and new Director of Planning, following an extensive recruitment exercise. The Director of Community Services role is currently vacant and being covered by other members of the CLT.

The Head of Internal Audit, provided through a framework contract with Mazars, has direct access to the Finance Director, to the Chief Executive, other CLT members and reports to Members through the Standards and Audit Committee. These arrangements are in accordance with CIPFA guidance in their publications 'Role of the Chief Financial Officer' and 'Role of the Head of Internal Audit'.

6. Significant Governance Issues

In formulating this year's Governance Statement a range of evidence has been reviewed including Statements from senior managers and Internal Audit reviews. To avoid duplication such findings are not noted in this statement other than where their implications could affect the overall effectiveness of the Authority's governance procedures and require action under the Governance Plan.

The following areas have been identified as areas for improvement in the Governance Plan and need further action in order to ensure governance arrangements remain robust for the future:

- (i) Corporate Strategy
Prepare a 5 year plan covering 2022-2027 defining the Council's core vision and informing service delivery
- (ii) Community Engagement
Strengthen community engagement by the introduction of new online civic space and launch of a new residents' panel
- (iii) Follow up actions from external reviews
Work on the areas of improvement identified by the November 2019 Peer Review and Independent review into the Woking Football Club and Associated Developments
- (iv) CIPFA Financial Management Code
Ensure that the Council's governance arrangements comply with the Financial Management Code which has been published by The Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants (CIPFA).

7. Conclusion

We are satisfied that the Authority has in place the necessary practices and procedures for a comprehensive governance framework, the governance arrangements provide assurance that intended outcomes will be achieved, and remain fit for purpose. The actions above will deliver further improvements and we will continue to monitor, evaluate and report on progress as part of our next annual review.

Leader of the Council
Cllr A Azad
Date

Chief Executive
J Fisher
Date

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements		Position at Woking
A	Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law	
A1	Ensuring members and officers behave with integrity and lead a culture where acting in the public interest is visibly and consistently demonstrated thereby protecting the reputation of the organisation	There are Codes of Conduct for both Employees and Members. The culture and behaviours required are covered in new Member briefings. The Council has a complaints procedure details of which are on the Council's website. Staff briefings visibly set the tone for staff and consistently demonstrate the public service ethos. Copies of staff briefings are available to view for anyone who has missed them.
A2	Ensuring members take the lead in establishing specific standard operating principles or values for the organisation and its staff and that they are communicated and understood. These should build on the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles)	The Council has both Employee and Member Code of Conducts which reflect the 'Seven Principles of Public Life'. Staff and Member inductions cover these Codes. Training is provided as considered necessary.
A3	Leading by example and using the above standard operating principles or values as a framework for decision making and other actions	The Council has a written constitution which sets out, amongst other things, the organisational structure of the Council, the responsibilities of committees and members as individuals, a scheme of delegation to officers and codes of conduct. The Constitution was last updated for the Municipal year commencing May 2021. The Constitution reflects the strong leader approach, and the Council has identified Portfolio holders and shadow portfolio holders. In July 2019 the Council established the Governance Review Task Group to review the governance and committee structure at the Council and whether it would be beneficial to change the existing governance structure.
A4	Demonstrating, communicating and embedding the standard operating principles or values through appropriate policies and processes which are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are operating effectively	Policies are reviewed on a regular basis. The Behaviour & Skills Framework for staff is part of the Performance Development Review process. Internal Audit review for appropriate and regularly updated policies, and undertake specific work in areas such as gifts and hospitality.
A5	Seeking to establish, monitor and maintain the organisation's ethical standards and performance	Induction training for all staff incorporates the organisational and operational framework of the Council. A comprehensive training programme is provided for members which includes mandatory training. The Standards and Audit Committee is responsible for: (i) promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by councillors and co-opted members in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct; (ii) assisting councillors and co-opted members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct;

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements		Position at Woking
		<p>(iii) advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct;</p> <p>(iv) monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct;</p> <p>(v) advising, training or arranging to train councillors and co-opted members on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct;</p> <p>(vi) determining allegations that there has been a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct in accordance with arrangements adopted by Council;</p> <p>(vii) act as the Council's Audit Committee. In performing this task the Standards and Audit Committee will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · approve the plans of Internal Audit and consider the External Audit plan, · receive the Annual Audit and Inspection letter from External Audit; · receive Internal Audit recommendations for improvements and assurance that action has been taken where necessary; · review summary Internal Audit reports (located on the intranet); · receive a half yearly and annual report from the Chief Internal Auditor on the work of Internal Audit; · receive appropriate matters of concern raised by either External or Internal Audit or other agencies; and · ensure that there are effective relationships between Internal and External Audit and promote the value of the audit process; <p>(viii) overseeing the Council's Risk Management, Anti-Fraud and Whistleblowing strategies, and Health and Safety policies and practices;</p> <p>(ix) the receipt of the Annual Governance Statement; and</p> <p>(x) oversight of payments in cases of maladministration which are neither disputed nor significant (which are dealt with by the Monitoring Officer)</p>
A6	Underpinning personal behaviour with ethical values and ensuring they permeate all aspects of the organisation's culture and operation	<p>The constitution contains a member code of conduct together with a number of statements and protocols covering registration of interests, anti-fraud and corruption policy.</p> <p>The Council has a code of conduct for officers.</p> <p>The Council has a Customer code of conduct together with an equalities and diversity policy designed to define the relationship with customers and to remove any bias in dealing with the community.</p> <p>We also have a number of HR policies such as Anti bullying and Whistleblowing that relate to conduct and personal behaviour.</p>

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements		Position at Woking
A7	Developing and maintaining robust policies and procedures which place emphasis on agreed ethical values	<p>The Council operates within a framework which includes codes of conduct, customer service policies, equality and diversity policies, vision and values all of which serve to provide an environment promoting ethical standards and equality of treatment.</p> <p>The Member code of conduct and the constitution require the declaration of interests of officers and members to be made at meetings where matters require such a declaration including meetings of the Thameswey Group boards. Other declarations and registrations include related party transactions for members and senior officers, members and senior officers recording when a relative is employed by the council, interests of officers in contracts involving relatives, and declarations of gifts and hospitality by all in a register maintained by the Director of Democratic and Legal Services. Members' interests are published on the Council website. The Council approved an officer conflicts of interest protocol during 2020.</p> <p>The Council has a confidential reporting 'whistleblowing' policy which is accessible via the intranet and internet.</p>
A8	Ensuring 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 organisation	<p>The council clearly understands its role as a leader within the local community and has set out within its values the way in which the authority should operate - e.g. openness, honesty, transparency - when dealing with all elements of the community and the expectation that others associated with the Council will operate similarly to engender a positive and trusting relationship.</p> <p>Expectations are incorporated into contractual arrangements where appropriate and addressed at contract meetings.</p>
A9	Ensuring members and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of the law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations	<p>The Director of Democratic and Legal Services is the Council's Monitoring Officer, responsible for ensuring the Council acts in accordance with the Constitution.</p> <p>Committee reports consider legal implications, set out in a new section in each report from May 2021. External legal advice is taken where appropriate.</p> <p>Legislative matters are dealt with at local level where changes are evaluated by suitably qualified staff supported by legal services.</p> <p>Major legislative change will require the Legal service to assess, evaluate and advise on the impact of legislative changes.</p> <p>The constitution sets out the limits of activity. Legislation around the power of general competence means the Council has wide legislative powers to</p>

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements		Position at Woking
		undertake activities for the benefit of its community and seeks to make full use of these.
A10	Creating 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 requirements	The Constitution sets out the responsibilities of the statutory officers. The 3 statutory officers (Chief Executive – Head of Paid Service, Director of Democratic and Legal Services – Monitoring Officer, and Finance Director – Chief Finance Officer/Section 151 Officer) are members of the Council’s Corporate Leadership Team (CLT). CLT meets weekly, there are regular meetings between the Chief Executive and Council Leader and with portfolio holders to discuss and challenge proposals.
A11	Striving to optimize the use of the full powers available for the benefit of citizens, communities and other stakeholders	It is the responsibility of the relevant CLT member to identify opportunities to benefit local citizens, prioritising those considered most beneficial to the community and meeting the locally identified needs. Through the Personal Development Review process, and the Behaviour and Skills framework, the Council encourages staff to be challenging and innovative and improvements are brought in by senior managers and their staff. Officers work with colleagues across the local government sector to share best practice and new ideas.
A12	Dealing with breaches of legal and regulatory provisions effectively	The Council has effective processes in place in the event of any breaches. It is the responsibility of the Monitoring Officer to assess the appropriate actions.
A13	Ensuring corruption and misuse of power are dealt with effectively	There are procedures for reporting any suspected issues, and for dealing with any identified instances. This may include the involvement of the police. There is a formal complaints procedure which provides for a response from a manager and allows for an appeal to be considered if the complainant is not satisfied. The Legal section monitors corrective action taken in response to upheld Ombudsman complaints against the authority. The Standards and Audit Committee reviews the outcome of Ombudsman complaints. There is a protocol for dealing with Member complaints about other Members. Officers and members are required to declare interests in issues being determined by the Council and generally with regard to any business of the Council. Standing orders and financial regulations have similar requirements governing operational decisions made by officers.

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements		Position at Woking
		<p>The register of interests is a public document and is available on the Council’s website.</p> <p>The council has a confidential reporting policy for staff available through ewokplus. Members of the public normally write to one of the three Statutory Officers.</p> <p>The Vision and Values statement requires members and officers to demonstrate these behaviours</p>
B	Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement	
B1	Ensuring an open culture through demonstrating, documenting and communicating the organisation’s commitment to openness	<p>The Council is committed to openness, support and respect. Procedural rules make detailed provision for rights of access for public and members. The council complies with statutory requirements regarding access e.g. to financial information and responses to Freedom of Information requests. The sharepoint based system is used to manage the Council’s response to Freedom of Information requests. Performance and breaches are reported to CLT monthly.</p> <p>There is also extensive information published on the internet. This continues to be developed in accordance with the Local Government Transparency Code. The Council uses the datashare software and continues to add more information here to enable easy access for members of the public.</p> <p>There is an internal and external communications strategy</p> <p>The Council issues regular press releases to the local media. Committee reports are available on the Council’s website and meetings are webcast with the recording also available afterwards to view.</p> <p>The Green Book performance monitoring and financial information is published monthly and also available on the Council website.</p> <p>There is a Marketing and Communications strategy and action plan.</p>
B2	Making decisions that are open about actions, plans, resource use, forecasts, outputs and outcomes. The presumption is for openness. If that is not the case, a justification for the reasoning for keeping a decision confidential should be provided.	<p>The Council has published a one year Corporate Plan and is working towards a 5 year Corporate Strategy which will cover 2022-2027.</p> <p>Decisions only made confidentially with specific reasons provided. Items held in part 2 of the agenda are kept to a minimum where there is</p>

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements		Position at Woking
		<p>information of a confidential, commercial third party or personal nature. Wherever possible decisions and discussion is public and broadcast on webcasts also available to view afterwards on the Council’s website. If necessary supporting confidential details are provided in a separate report, with the discussion in Part 1 unless it is necessary to refer to the confidential data.</p> <p>A confidentiality protocol was adopted by the Council in October 2020. This covers occasions where the Council is involved in a transaction which requires confidentiality to protect the interests of the Council or the party the Council is dealing with. It also covers arrangements for recording and reviewing any confidentiality clauses with contracts and non-disclosure agreements.</p> <p>Delegated decisions are published on the Council’s website.</p>
B3	<p>Providing clear reasoning and evidence for decision in both public records and explanations to stakeholders and being explicit about the criteria, rationale and considerations used. In due course, ensuring that the impact and consequences of those decisions are clear</p>	<p>The Council uses Modern gov, an application which serves to make reports available to officers members and the public. This provides transparency across WBC and other partners (eg SCC) which aids partnership working. Relevant officers can add their appropriate comments during the report preparation process. Portfolio holders and the Executive are briefed on reports prior to publication.</p> <p>The Council has developed a Sharepoint based solution to monitor progress on decisions made at meetings</p> <p>Reports are drafted using a standard, logical structure which supports decision making and assists clear reasoning and the provision of evidence. Impact assessments are completed for each committee report.</p> <p>Project documentation includes reasoning, justification of the project and post project impact assessment.</p>
B4	<p>Using formal and informal consultation and engagement to determine the most appropriate and effective intervention/courses of action</p>	<p>The Council is improving engagement through the introduction of new online Civic Space software ‘Woking Community Forum’ and Residents Panel. The Community Forum has been used to consult on the Housing Strategy and will be used to engage on the Town Centre Masterplan during 2021/22.</p> <p>The Leader is part of the wider Surrey Local Authorities ‘Leader Group’ and senior officers engage in County wide professional groups.</p>

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements		Position at Woking
		<p>A Business Breakfast meeting is held each year which provides an opportunity to update the business community on the Council’s plans and receive feedback.</p> <p>Officers engage widely with community and resident association groups.</p> <p>Members are represented on various community groups. The Council provides approximately £1.2m of funding for voluntary groups and senior officers regularly meet with representatives.</p>
B5	Effectively engaging 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	<p><i>Institutional stakeholders are the other organisations that local government needs to work with to improve services and outcomes (commercial partners, suppliers, other public and third sector organisations) or organisations to which they are accountable.</i></p> <p>The Council has well developed relationships with other local authorities, including Surrey County Council, through joint working groups, health service, voluntary and community groups. There is a Woking Joint Committee which has responsibility for decision making across range of services.</p> <p>Officers have regular contact with government departments and other government bodies on projects and government policies.</p> <p>Members of CLT take the lead on key relationships and feedback through CLT meetings and team meetings as appropriate. The Council’s approach is to be supportive of others and engage in discussions and work programmes.</p>
B6	Developing formal and informal partnerships to allow for resources to be used more efficiently and outcomes achieved more effectively	<p>The Council has outsourced a number of services where outcomes can be achieved more efficiently and effectively. Close relationships have been developed with those providers of the outsourced provision: Leisure, Housing, Asset and Facilities Management.</p> <p>The Council has a joint waste contract with 3 other Surrey Districts, which became operational for Woking in September 2017 and generated savings across the partners. The joint team continue to work to ensure the contract is effective.</p> <p>Where there are areas of expertise/capacity officers work with colleagues across Surrey to make good use of resource – examples include on street parking, fraud, environmental health, home improvement agency and health and safety.</p>

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements		Position at Woking
		<p>The Council supports Community Groups and local partners - £1.2m funded in year – to achieve local outcomes.</p> <p>The Thameswey group of companies, wholly owned by the Council, was set up to effectively seek local outcomes in a more commercial environment. The group includes joint venture companies with a development partner.</p> <p>The Council works with Surrey County Council (SCC) where appropriate on projects affecting County Council responsibilities but where local involvement is beneficial. A number of services are managed on an agency basis.</p> <p>The Joint Committee (SCC/WBC) was established in June 2014. Its primary focus is to improve outcomes and value for money for citizens and businesses of Woking by strengthening local democracy and improving partnership working in the Borough. Both Councils have delegated decision-making powers to the Joint Committee across a wide range of activities and it makes joint decisions on various strands of work including Community Safety, Health and Safety, Youth, Highways, On-Street Parking, Infrastructure and Early Help.</p> <p>There are regular meetings with the Woking Chamber of Commerce.</p>
B7	Ensuring 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.	<p>The Council's key partners are the group of companies set up to deliver the Council key priorities of affordable housing and energy/environment matters and developments.</p> <p>A set of protocols has been developed and approved by the Council and the Thameswey Group to improve the governance and transparency of the Thameswey Group activities. The number of Independent Directors of Group companies has been increased for 2021/22 recognising the increasing scale of the businesses and the benefit of independent members of the Boards. A formal period of service has also been set.</p> <p>There are briefings for Members on Group activities and Members can attend Board meetings. In July 2020 the Council adopted a Standards Protocol, subject to the Members' Code of Conduct, which enables all Members to receive more detailed information produced by Thameswey.</p>

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements		Position at Woking
		Other objectives are being progressed through joint ventures with other organisations most notably the Victoria Square regeneration. Appropriate arrangements are in place to support these joint ventures. To make efficiency savings the Council has worked with other local authorities and organisations to transform the way services are delivered. This includes joint procurement, sharing accommodation or outsourcing such as has happened with Leisure, HRA and Asset/Facilities Management. All joint arrangements are monitored appropriately.
B8	Establishing a clear policy on the type of issues that the organisation will meaningfully consult with or involve communities, individual citizens, service users and other stakeholders to ensure that service provision is contributing towards the achievement of intended outcomes	Consultation takes place on a wide variety of issues where the community can influence the outcome whether they be by whole Borough, geographical areas or service/interest specific. The arrangements for consultation are published on the Council's website. New engagement software, Woking Community Forum, has been introduced to enhance community engagement and consultation.
B9	Ensuring that communication methods are effective and that members and officers are clear about their roles with regard to community engagement	Formal arrangements exist with a number of stakeholder bodies – Business Breakfast (NNDR consultation), tenants and user organisations for various services such as Leisure and parking. This is a focus for development during 2021 with a new Residents' Panel, and the Community Forum.
B10	Encouraging, collecting and evaluating the views and experiences of communities, citizens, service users and organisations of different backgrounds including reference to future needs.	<p>The Council has an external communications policy and utilises a number of communication channels - self serve via internet; consultation with the residents' panel; appropriate consultation as required for specific issues. Alternative arrangements will be made for hard to reach sections of the community.</p> <p>The Residents' Panel was re-launched in 2020 and a programme of engagement is being established for 2021.</p> <p>The council has adopted a principles of consulting document, published on the internet providing guidance on the arrangements for engaging with all sections of the community recognising their different needs.</p> <p>The Council participates in and actively supports and consults with disabled groups to help frame policy and services.</p> <p>Resources are in place to ensure community engagement is managed strategically and the Council has staff who are trained facilitators offering a range of skills to engage appropriately with different groups and sections of the community.</p>

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements		Position at Woking
		Where necessary appropriate use is made of specialist resources to engage with particular cultures, languages, disabilities, etc. Work with and use partners' expertise to engage with different groups, e.g. Connect to Innovation and Surrey Chamber of Commerce to engage with businesses and the commercial sector
B11	Implementing effective feedback mechanisms in order to demonstrate how views have been taken into account	Any complaints received are used to improve service delivery at a local level. The Council advises on responses to consultations either individually or by way of committee reporting as appropriate.
B12	Balancing feedback from more active stakeholder groups with other stakeholder groups to ensure inclusivity	The Council seeks to use objective data sources to balance special interest group representations with wider community interest.
B13	Taking account of the impact of decision on future generations of tax payers and service users	The Council takes a long term view through preparation of long term plans and strategies – Woking 2027, Core Strategy, Woking 2050, Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Council has a Corporate Plan, adopted in February 2021, and is working on a Corporate Strategy covering 2022-2027.
C	Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits	
C1	Having a clear vision, which is an agreed formal statement of the organisation's purpose and intended outcomes containing appropriate performance indicators, which provide the basis for the organisation's overall strategy, planning and other decisions	The Woking 2050, Woking 2027 and Natural Woking strategies set out priorities. The Joint Committee makes decisions across a range of services. The Council actively pursues priorities agreed with partner organisations and the wider community through on-going consultation The Council's priorities have been agreed and are approved annually through the service planning process and manifesto pledges. Engagement with residents during 2021 will establish priorities and support the Corporate Strategy going forward. The service planning process is supported by a corporate team. The structure of the plan emphasises the way service plans contribute to the development of People, Place and Us. The Service and Performance Plan is available via the Council's website. Service plans feed into PDR objective setting following the 'golden thread'
C2	Specifying 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	Impact assessments for each committee report. The report format supports the provision of impact summary, reasons for and implications of decisions.

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements		Position at Woking
C3	Delivering defined outcomes on a sustainable basis within the resources that will be available	Performance management is well imbedded at the Council with detailed reporting published and publicly available each month. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out the resources that are available and the actions required to ensure a sustainable future. The MTFS is formally updated annually, with updates during the year through budget and other finance papers. Other decisions are made in the context of the MTFS.
C4	Identifying and managing risks to the achievement of outcomes	Comprehensive Service and Corporate Risk Registers are regularly reviewed.
C5	Managing service users' expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available	Service Users expectations are 'managed' by advising of the Council's priorities through the Service Planning process. There are ongoing dialogues with groups regarding the best uses of the resources available.
C6	Considering and balancing the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies and plans when taking decisions about service provision	The balancing of economic, social and environmental factors is extensively considered as part of the Place Making role led by the Council.
C7	Taking a longer-term view with regard to decision making, taking account of risk and acting transparently where there are potential conflicts between the organisation's intended outcomes and short-term factors such as the political cycle or financial constraints	The Council has a Medium Term Financial Strategy which sets out the challenges over the next 3-5 years, together with long term planning, climate change and sustainability strategies. The Capital Strategy and Investment Programme demonstrate the Council's longer term view. Many of the decisions currently being made are long term in nature with Members considering the long term benefits and future need – eg Infrastructure investment, Victoria Square, Sheerwater Regeneration, protection of employment space and Brookwood Cemetery.
C8	Determining the wider public interest associated with balancing conflicting interests between achieving the various economic, social and environmental benefits, through consultation where possible, in order to ensure appropriate trade-offs	The wider public interest is assessed through public consultation on particular issues. Ultimately the public direction is set through the annual election cycle.
C9	Ensuring fair access to services	Equalities reporting, officer, portfolio holders, considered in all decision reports, considered in fees and charges An Annual Equalities Report is provided to the Executive and an external assessment of the Council by the LGA found that we are at the 'Achieving' level on the Equalities Framework.
D	Determining the interventions necessary to optimize the achievement of the intended outcomes	
D1	Ensuring decision makers receive objective and rigorous analysis of a variety of options indicating how intended outcomes would be achieved and associated risk. Therefore ensuring best value is achieved however services are provided	Executive and Council reports contain detailed information to support decision making and provide options on the course of action.

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements		Position at Woking
		<p>Members of the Executive have portfolio responsibilities and strong relationships with lead officers enabling rigorous challenge of the information and analysis provided.</p> <p>Matters requiring decisions are reported to the Executive or appropriate committee for approval. The report format is standard providing information in a consistent and comprehensive way.</p> <p>All reports include a section for financial implications of reports. Other standard sections have been consolidated for 2021/22 to provide better focus of advice in reports, and a legal implications section has been added.</p> <p>The process for approving reports includes publishing a forward programme of reports, a timetable for the preparation of reports that specifically provides for the involvement of portfolio holder, CLT and Executive prior to publication. CLT review draft agendas and reports as part of the weekly meeting.</p>
D2	Considering feedback from citizens and service users when making decisions about service improvements or where services are no longer required in order to prioritise competing demands within limited resources available including people, skills, land and assets and bearing in mind future impacts	Reviews of service needs inform strategies. The new Community Forum software will facilitate gathering resident feedback which will be used to prioritise services through the Corporate Strategy and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) cycle during 2021.
D3	Establishing and implementing robust planning and control cycles that cover strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets	Service planning is well embedded at the Council. The plans provide more focused information and link the strategic objectives and operational plans. Targets are agreed and performance monitored through the monthly Green Book publication.
D4	Engaging with internal and external stakeholders in determining how services and other courses of action should be planned and delivered	Internal consultation is through staff briefings, surveys and team meetings. CLT minutes and decisions are available and there are regular meetings between CLT and Unison. External consultations are undertaken on specific issues. The Woking Joint Committee is a joint committee of Woking Borough Council and Surrey County Council.
D5	Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively including shared risks	The Council is experienced in working closely with partners and will identify and monitor risks through an appropriate review mechanism. There are detailed contract management processes for the Council's major contracts (Freedom, NVH, Skanska etc plus joint waste) where risk is considered.
D6	Ensuring arrangements are flexible and agile so that the mechanisms for delivering goods and services can be adapted to changing circumstances	The Council, where appropriate, builds flexibility into contractual (or other) arrangements with third party providers of goods and services. Larger

	The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	Position at Woking
		contracts will have formal change control clauses, with smaller contracts allowing more informal change management through dialogue. The Council has a responsive management style and will make appropriate changes as circumstances dictate building strong relationships with providers which enable flexibility.
D7	Establishing appropriate key performance indicators as part of the planning process in order to identify how the performance of services and projects is to be measured	Key performance indicators are set to improve performance over time usually to achieve top quartile performance. Performance Indicators are reviewed to ensure they remain the most appropriate and relevant for the Council. Efficiency improvements and income generating assets have been identified to enable the maintenance of service delivery. External Audit continues to assess and report on the Council's value for money approach.
D8	Ensuring capacity exists to generate the information required to review service quality regularly	CLT regularly considers the adequacy of resources and redirects as required. All requests to recruit staff are considered by CLT which enables capacity to be used flexibly depending on priorities. It is recognised that it may be necessary to allocate resource in some areas to enable review of service provision and transformation during 2021.
D9	Preparing budgets in accordance with objectives strategies and the medium term financial plan	The Council's planning and budgeting processes are closely aligned in the Business planning process. Service plans and budgets are prepared together. The financial strategy makes provision for known changes to services including legislative changes, growth, efficiency savings and the impact of the investment programme. The budget papers provide a summary of the MTFS and high level update. The budget reflects the overarching strategy set in the MTFS and links to the latest plan. The MTFS is subsequently updated to reflect the new base and actions required. The 2021/22 budget recognised the financial uncertainty following the Covid pandemic and used reserves to manage the short term deficit. The MTFS approved in April 2021 reflected the need to address the medium term financial sustainability of the Council through the 2021/22 process.
D10	Informing medium and long term resource planning by drawing up realistic estimates of revenue and capital expenditure aimed at developing a sustainable funding strategy	The March 2020 update of the MTFS was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the 2021/22 budget was prepared to maintain services while the future financial position was assessed. The MTFS in April 2021 reflected future risks and the process for setting a sustainable financial strategy will be developed during 2021/22. Historically a cautious view on government funding has been taken which has required additional savings to be identified and achieved. Uncertainties and flexibilities are identified within the forecasts.

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements		Position at Woking
		There was an Internal Audit review of the MTFS during 2018 which included comparison with other councils. The Investment Programme is based on best estimated timing and costings for projects which are being worked up. Where it is not possible to include an estimated figure, the narrative report notes the exclusion.
D11	Ensuring the medium term financial strategy integrates and balances service priorities, affordability and other resource constraints	The MTFS works from the Council's Service Plans with the latest approved budgets used as a base. Future enhancements and changes to services as well as Council responsibilities are identified and brought into the summary position to establish the medium term challenges. The mitigations to the identified pressures, and the supporting narrative, balance the need to scale back plans and developments and costs with the desire to find a way to be able to further priority areas. Further development of service planning, identifying priority areas and opportunities for service transformation is planned for 2021/22 and will be reflected in the MTFS.
D12	Ensuring the budgeting process is all-inclusive, taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term	Budgets cover all services areas, project and Investment Programme spend, together with treasury implications. In setting the annual budget a view on the implications for reserves is provided together with reserves forecasts. Capital spend decisions are subject to consideration of the medium term position including servicing and repayment of any debt. Strategic Properties acquired using borrowing are written down on an annuity basis ensuring that the debt is repaid over the long term.
D13	Ensuring the medium term financial strategy sets the context for ongoing decisions on significant delivery issues or responses to changes in the external environment that may arise during the budgetary period in order for outcomes to be achieved while optimizing resource usage	The MTFS is subject to at least annual review and is the subject of staff briefings. It is referred to/updated in each budget report. All committee reports include a financial implications section where any impacts are highlighted and many refer directly to the MTFS.
D14	Ensuring the achievement of 'social value' through service planning and commissioning	Service planning takes into consideration 'social value' including working with partners and voluntary groups across the community.
E	Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it	
E1	Reviewing operations, performance and use of assets on a regular basis to ensure their continuing effectiveness	Performance information is reported on a monthly basis to members and senior officers and is available to the public on line. The reporting includes exceptional variations from expected service - both good and bad - together with the action being taken to correct poor service. Complaints are monitored and used to inform the performance of a service.
E2	Improving resource use through appropriate application of techniques such as benchmarking and other options in order to determine how resources are allocated so that defined outcomes are achieved effectively and efficiently	Benchmarking is used on particular service reviews and where decisions regarding changes to services are being considered. The Council has relationships, and regularly meets with, other local Authorities and shares/learns from the work they are undertaking. Officers meet at a

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements		Position at Woking
		professional level and provide advice and experience to each other. Joint work is completed – eg waste contract – where the opportunities arise. All service options are considered including working with partners to achieve the most efficient provision of services.
E3	Recognising the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved	The Council actively looks for opportunities to collaborate and achieve better value for money. The Joint Waste contract with 3 other local Districts started September 2017. Other joint working includes Environmental Health, On-Street Parking, Home Improvement Agency and Health and Safety. The Council works closely with community groups, SCC and Health services.
E4	Developing and maintaining an effective workforce plan to enhance the strategic allocation of resources	The management structure reflects the strategic needs and focus of the Council. Directors of Neighbourhood Services and Community Services joined the Corporate Leadership Team in 2020. The former Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive retired on 31 March 2021 and, following an extensive recruitment exercise, were replaced by from April 2021 by the current Chief Executive and new Director of Planning. The Director of Community Services role is currently vacant and being covered by other members of the CLT. The focus of resources will continue to be assessed during 2021 alongside development of the Corporate Strategy and MTFS.
E5	Developing protocols to ensure that elected and appointed leaders negotiate with each other regarding their respective roles early on in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained	The Constitution sets out roles and responsibilities. Long term plans/objectives set out the Council's vision and direction. Members and officers have good working relationships and regular communications.
E6	Publishing a statement that specifies the types of decision that are delegated and those reserved for the collective decision making of the governing body	The Constitution sets out the responsibilities and delegations.
E7	Ensuring the leader and the chief executive have clearly defined and distinctive leadership roles within a structure whereby the chief executive leads 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	The Constitution schedules the responsibilities that are reserved for full meetings of Council and those that are delegated to the Executive or other committees and officers. The delegations are reviewed annually. The Constitution was updated for the Municipal year commencing May 2021. The Leader of the Council has delegated the functions of a strong leader to the Executive. The Constitution contains schemes of delegation for those activities which are delegated to officers. Those

	The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	Position at Woking
		<p>officers have prepared schemes of sub delegations to other officers to enable business to be conducted. Following the introduction of Regulations each time a formal delegated decision is made it is recorded and made available via the internet.</p> <p>The Chief Executive, Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council have frequent meetings concerning the business and operation of the Council. The Chief Executive also meets regularly with other Group Leaders. CLT meet the Executive on a regular basis to discuss formal Executive business and future plans</p> <p>Portfolio and shadow portfolio holders are nominated for each of the Council’s activities. It is the responsibility of Senior Managers and CLT to keep their respective portfolio holder informed of developments in their areas and wider issues. Other members are briefed as appropriate.</p> <p>During the response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, weekly meetings were held between the Group Leaders of all political parties and CLT.</p>
E8	<p>Developing the capabilities of members and senior management to achieve effective 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring members and staff have access to appropriate induction tailored to their role and that ongoing training and development matching individual and organisational requirements is available and encouraged • Ensuring members and officers have the appropriate skills, knowledge, resources and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities and ensuring that they are able to update their knowledge on a continuing basis • Ensuring personal, organisational and system-wide development through shared learning, including lessons learnt from governance weaknesses both internal and external 	<p>Senior Management are developed through the Leadership programme, together with Corporate training programmes. There is support through the PDR process and Peer groupings. There is a comprehensive training programme for Members. The Council’s commitment to Member development was first comprehensively assessed by South East Employers in March 2011. Since then Woking has successfully maintained Charter status for Elected Member Development, achieving reaccreditation every three years. The Council was successfully assessed for reaccreditation in 2018/19.</p> <p>The Members Training policy is adopted annually by the Council and includes mandatory training on specific topics. More on-line training has also been introduced to make sessions more accessible to Members.</p> <p>The Council reviews its programme for Member Development annually and has developed a comprehensive learning and Development Framework together with the Roles and Responsibilities of Elected Members. This covers a wide range of issues of interest to new and existing members.</p>

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements		Position at Woking
		<p>Members receive comprehensive briefings and training in overview and scrutiny and a 'Toolkit for successful scrutiny' has been developed and is provided to all Members.</p> <p>Membership of committees is reviewed annually to assist in member development.</p> <p>A range of vocational and non-vocational training is available to officers. Officer training is managed by the HR section against a Learning and Development plan.</p> <p>Over the last 3 years the Council has implemented a Management Training Programme. Senior Managers and the Council's Executive have taken part in this training including personality and behaviour assessments which has then been progressed to the next tier of management.</p> <p>The organisational structure of the Council provides opportunities for succession planning and internal progression. This is further strengthened by the Behaviour and Skills framework where each post has scored competencies accessible by all so career progression will be easier to identify.</p>
E9	Ensuring that there are structures in place to encourage public participation	<p>The Woking Community Forum has been launched in 2021 to enhance public participation. Its use will be developed during the year.</p> <p>Members of the public can ask questions of Executive Members at the Executive meetings. They can also ask questions at the Joint Committee. The Constitution sets out the processes for consideration of petitions depending on the number of signatures.</p>
E10	Taking steps to consider the leadership's own effectiveness and ensuring leaders are open to constructive feedback from peer review and inspections	<p>The LGA Peer review was completed in November 2019, and sought to assess progress made against the 2015 peer review recommendations. The report and Council responses were considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Executive and Council in July 2020. The recommendations of the review were accepted and the Council sought to implement them during 2020.</p>
E11	Holding staff to account through regular performance reviews which take account of training or development needs	<p>There is a formal annual Performance Development Review process.</p>

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements		Position at Woking
E12	Ensuring arrangements are in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce and support individuals in maintaining their own physical and mental wellbeing	<p>Sickness levels are monitored by managers and HR and reported in the Green Book.</p> <p>The HR team provide support where issues have been identified. There are active Health and Wellbeing programmes for staff.</p> <p>During the Covid pandemic the Council has provided access to additional mental health support for staff.</p> <p>The Council received the Health and Wellbeing Good Practice Award following the 2019 Investors in People assessment.</p>
F	Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management	
F1	Recognising that risk management is an integral part of all activities and must be considered in all aspects of decision making	<p>The Council has adopted a risk management strategy. Risk is covered in all committee reports and embedded in Service Planning.</p>
F2	Implementing robust and integrated risk management arrangements and ensuring that they are working effectively	<p>The Strategic risk register is considered by CLT</p> <p>Operational risk registers</p> <p>Risk registers have been prepared. The risks associated with a course of action are required as part of all committee reports and a risk log is a requirement of all projects recorded on the project monitoring system within sharepoint.</p> <p>Business continuity, particularly for ICT, has been developed and the Council has its own data centre.</p> <p>There have been tests of business continuity in times of bad weather and in the Council's response to the Covid-19 crisis.</p> <p>The Council has insurance to insure risks. Excesses have been set based on analysis and advice of the broker. Insurance provision is reviewed annually as part of the renewal programme. Claims are handled within the necessary time limits</p> <p>Other risks are identified in the budget and a risk contingency provided. Reserves have been set up to address specific financial risks.</p> <p>The risk management information assists in the operational aspects of service delivery. A relatively simple approach is taken to assessing likelihood and severity of risk to determine high, medium, low risks.</p> <p>Major Project dashboards (eg. Victoria Square and Sheerwater projects) report on risks.</p>

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements		Position at Woking
		Key risks are identified and monitored e.g. key budget risks and performance are monitored in the green book. Key risks in projects are monitored as part of the project management methodology. Corrective action is taken to avoid or mitigate the risks.
F3	Ensuring that responsibilities for managing individual risks are clearly allocated	<p>All risk registers allocate risk to individual managers as risk owners.</p> <p>The Deputy Chief Executive was the nominated champion for risk management and business continuity during 2020/21. Risk management is embedded into the processes of the organisation. All committee reports require the risks associated with the matter of the report to be included in the report.</p> <p>The project management arrangements of the Council require a risk log to be prepared identifying the risks and the mitigating action to be taken. The financial strategy and budget reports indicate risks within the budget and provide a risk contingency.</p> <p>The Executive is the committee responsible for risk management and business continuity with overview by the Standards and Audit Committee</p>
F4	Monitoring service delivery effectively including planning, specification, execution and independent post implementation review	<p>There is monthly reporting of key performance measures, financial performance against budgets, Treasury Management information and Group company information in the monthly 'Performance and Financial Monitoring Information' publication - the green book. This also includes information on the Sheerwater Regeneration and Strategic Properties – areas identified as requiring close monitoring. The Green Book provides information on current performance and describes any corrective action to be taken. It is considered by Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and at each Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Committee and is published on the Council's website.</p> <p>In the future decision/action tracking is through a Sharepoint based application.</p> <p>The Executive receives a quarterly report on all projects This summary report is drawn from the sharepoint application used to manage projects.</p>
F5	Making decisions based on relevant, clear objective analysis and advice pointing out the implication and risks inherent in the organisation's financial, social and environmental position and outlook	The report structures support decision making, prompting comment on the key considerations. Impact assessments are prepared for committee reports. Delegations to officers are included in the Constitution.

	The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	Position at Woking
F6	Ensuring an effective scrutiny or oversight function is in place which provides constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives before, during and after decisions are made thereby enhancing the organisation's performance and that of any organisation for which it is responsible	<p>The Council has an O&S committee. The committee is supported by task groups including two standing task groups for Finance and Housing.</p> <p>There are project specific oversight groups for the most significant developments – Victoria Square, Sheerwater and the town centre HIF project.</p> <p>Members have the opportunity to raise topics for consideration and the public can raise topics for review via the internet.</p> <p>The overview and Scrutiny Committee prepares an annual report on the activities of the committee and task groups reporting to it. The report is available on the internet (part of committee reports).</p> <p>The November 2019 Peer Review recommended that the Council review the effectiveness and resourcing of Overview and Scrutiny. Resources allocated to O&S have been reviewed and Internal Audit review into the O&S function is included as part of the 2021/22 audit plan.</p>
F7	Providing members and senior management with regular reports on service delivery plans and on progress towards outcome achievement	The 'Green Book' performance and monitoring report is produced and published on line each month. It is considered at each Executive meeting. Project reporting is prepared for management and Members quarterly.
F8	Ensuring there is consistency between specification stages (such as budgets) and post implementation reporting (eg. Financial statements)	Budgets and Financial Statements are reconciled and analysis provided in the foreword to the Statement of Accounts which links the Statutory Accounts to the Green Book monthly management reporting.
F9	Aligning the risk management strategy and policies on internal control with achieving objectives	The internal audit plan is a risk based plan taking into account risks identified through risk register as well as other factors such as audit knowledge of service delivery, and areas highlighted by CLT. This enables the allocation of audit resources. An annual risk management report is provided to the Executive.
F10	Evaluating and monitoring risk management and internal control on a regular basis	Risk management and internal control processes are regularly considered by Internal Audit as part of the annual programme of work. The Corporate Risk Register is reviewed by CLT 6 monthly. The Standards and Audit Committee receive reports on risk management and internal control from Internal Audit.

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements		Position at Woking
		Internal audit reports are used to provide assurance and improve the internal control framework. Internal Audit provide their opinion on the overall arrangements. Under the PSIAS internal audit is required to give assurance annually. The Internal Audit work programme is prepared using a risk based approach. Senior managers complete an assurance statement
F11	Ensuring effective counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are in place	The Council has an anti-fraud policy which is reviewed regularly. The register of Member's interests and register of gifts and hospitality may be reviewed by the Standards and Audit committee. Members interests, gifts and hospitality, are available on the Council's website. An internal audit review during 2019 made recommendations in relation to the Council's management of Fraud and Corruption work. The Council is working with the fraud team from another local authority which will provide support in this area.
F12	Ensuring additional assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control is provided by the internal auditor	The internal audit service is provided by Mazars through a framework contract with Croydon Council. The Head of Internal Audit (HIA) role is performed by Mazars. An annual report by the HIA on the overall adequacy of the control environment is considered by Standards and Audit committee. Internal Audit provide updates at each Standards and Audit meeting and CLT on a quarterly basis or as required. Summary Internal Audit reports are reviewed by CLT and made available to Members through their I pads.
F13	Ensuring an audit committee which is independent of the executive and accountable to the governing body: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a further source of effective assurance regarding arrangements for managing risk and maintaining an effective control environment That its recommendations are listened to and acted upon 	The Standards and Audit Committee performs the functions of an Audit Committee. It is independent of the Executive and reports to Council. It receives regular reports and seeks assurances from Internal Audit and External Audit.
F14	Ensuring effective arrangements are in place for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data, including processes to safeguard personal data	The Council has existing data protection and security policies to ensure the proper collection, use, storage and control of its assets including data and information. Since the introduction of GDPR in May 2018 there has been monthly reporting of GDPR and cybersecurity issues to CLT. The Director of Democratic and Legal Services undertakes the role of Data Protection Officer at the Council

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements		Position at Woking
F15	Ensuring effective arrangements are in place and operating effectively when sharing data with other bodies	Sharing data with other bodies is subject to oversight by the Director of Democratic and Legal Services. The Council has a number of Information Sharing Protocols with 3 rd parties which incorporate appropriate safeguards to protect data.
F16	Reviewing and auditing regularly the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring	Performance data is reported regularly to senior management and Members and published publicly. Any issues arising or anomalies are investigated.
F17	Ensuring financial management supports both long term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance	The Finance team monitors and reports on in-year performance and long term risks/financial pressures and trends. The Treasury management system tracks long term investments, and borrowing. Annual budget setting reports also refer to the MTFs, considering the long term implications of the budget to be approved.
F18	Ensuring well-developed financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control including management of financial risks and controls	Services are supported by specified contacts in the finance team. The finance system provides accessibility to financial information and integrated, electronic processes. Finance monitoring reports are used from the finance system. Finance reporting is included in the monthly Green book with high-risk areas covered in detail and other variances reported by exception. Financial regulations and other operational instructions are reviewed to ensure they remain up to date with regard to structures, limits and operating practices. Induction training for all new staff signposts them to these regulations which can be found on the intranet. An update on audit reports and the recommendations in reports is reported to the Standards and Audit at each meeting and summary reports are available to all members. A Treasury Management strategy is agreed by the Executive in February prior to the operational year and a review of activity and performance is published in July of the following year after the year has ended. The Council complies with CIPFA guidance on Treasury Management. Monitoring takes place monthly with information in the green book and the O&S Committee has responsibility for the scrutiny of the function and receives a mid-year report. Capital and Investment Strategies, are approved by the Council annually as part of the February budget papers. During 2021 the Council will consider any changes required as a result of the CIPFA Financial Management Code.

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements		Position at Woking
G	Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and	audit to deliver effective accountability
G1	Writing and communicating reports for the public and other stakeholders in a fair, balanced and understandable style appropriate to the intended audience and ensuring that they are easy to access and interrogate	Reports are written using plain language, in a standard format which assists with reviewing and ensures key information is covered. The Marketing and Communications team review language where appropriate and some communications are reviewed independently to provide confidence that they are easily understood and accessible. There is Marketing and Communications strategy. The Council website is designed to make information easy to access.
G2	Striking a balance between providing the right amount of information to satisfy transparency demands and enhance public scrutiny while not being too onerous to provide and for users to understand	The requirements of the Local Government Transparency Code 2014 are addressed by a 'View our data' section on the internet. The Council uses datashare to make data accessible. Committee documents and webcasts are available online. Reports include an Executive Summary and sections on key implications. Detailed supporting information is included in Appendices. There are corporate processes in place for FOI requests which include monthly performance reporting to CLT.
G3	Reporting at least annually on performance, value for money and stewardship of resources to stakeholders in a timely and understandable way	The Green Book is published monthly reporting performance issues and variances by exception so focused and understandable.
G4	Ensuring members and senior management own the results reported	CLT members and all portfolio holders are accountable for the Green Book – performance and financial monitoring/outturn.
G5	Ensuring robust arrangements for assessing the extent to which the principles contained in this Framework have been applied and publishing the results on this assessment, including an action plan for improvement and evidence to demonstrate good governance (the annual governance statement)	The assessment is led by the Finance Director and Monitoring Officer, supported by CLT. Evidence is compiled from IA and all Senior managers. The draft statement is reviewed by the Standards and Audit Committee. The draft Annual Governance Statement is published in draft in the Statement of Accounts. The final version is published with final accounts. Improvement Plan is updated and new actions added if appropriate as a result of each review.
G6	Ensuring that this Framework is applied to jointly managed or shared service organisations as appropriate	Where the Council is party to joint arrangements appropriate governance arrangements are put in place.
G7	Ensuring 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	The annual statutory accounts are prepared following accounting guidelines and standards in accordance with the Code of Practice and to statutory timescales. Reconciliations are prepared to demonstrate consistency with management reporting. The foreword provides a narrative link from the monthly management reporting to the statutory outturn.
G8	Ensuring that recommendations for corrective action made by external audit are acted upon	Standards and Audit committee receive reports from External Audit with status of any outstanding recommendations.

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements		Position at Woking
G9	Ensuring an effective internal audit service with direct access to members is in place, providing assurance with regard to governance arrangement and that recommendations are acted upon	<p>Internal Audit reports to each meeting of the Standards and Audit Committee including all reports and all recommendations made in the period. Summary reports are also available to members and independent members via their iPads. The implementation of audit recommendations is monitored through Sharepoint. Outstanding recommendations are reported to CLT and the Standards and Audit Committee. External Audit reports are presented to the Standards and Audit Committee as appropriate.</p> <p>The Standards and Audit committee has representation from across the council and is chaired by the Council’s independent member during the year. The committee has clear terms of reference for their responsibilities.</p> <p>An independent person (although not a member of the Standards Committee) has been appointed following the adoption of the standards framework.</p>
G12	Ensuring that when working in partnership arrangements for accountability are clear and the need for wider public accountability has been recognized and met	<p>The Joint Committee, which incorporates the ‘statutory’ Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership (Safer Woking Partnership), has agreed Terms of Reference and governance arrangements, that set out collective roles and responsibilities for participating organisations, including the Council.</p> <p>Services which are outsourced and operated by contractors are monitored.</p>