



TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Standards and Audit Committee to be held on Wednesday, 5 October 2022 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Gloucester Square, Woking, Surrey GU21 6YL.

The agenda for the meeting is set out below.

JULIE FISHER
Chief Executive

NOTE: Filming Council Meetings

Please note the meeting will be filmed and will be broadcast live and subsequently as an archive on the Council's website (www.woking.gov.uk). The images and sound recording will also be used for training purposes within the Council. Generally the public seating areas are not filmed. However by entering the meeting room and using the public seating area, you are consenting to being filmed.

AGENDA

PART I - PRESS AND PUBLIC PRESENT

1. Minutes

To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Standards and Audit Committee held on 7 July 2022 as published.

2. Apologies for Absence

To receive any apologies for absence.

3. Declarations of Interest (Pages 5 - 6)

- (i) To receive declarations of interest from Members and Officers in respect of any item to be considered at the meeting.
- (ii) In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Director of Legal and Democratic Services, Joanne McIntosh, declares a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) interest in any items concerning the companies of which she is a Council-appointed director. The companies are listed in the attached schedule. The interests are such that Mrs McIntosh may advise the Committee on those items.
- (iii) In accordance with the Officer Procedure Rules, the Finance Director, Leigh Clarke, declares a disclosable personal interest (pecuniary) in any items including reference to Woking Football Club, arising from her husband holding a small shareholding in the Club. The interests are such that Mrs Clarke may advise the Committee on those items.

4. Urgent Business

To consider any business that the Chairman rules may be dealt with under Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

Matters for Determination

5. Update on External Audit STA22-013 (Pages 7 - 18)

Reporting Person – Steve Bladen (BDO) and Leigh Clarke

6. Annual Governance Statement 2021/22 STA22-014 (Pages 19 - 82)

Reporting Person – Joanne McIntosh and Leigh Clarke

7. Internal Audit Service Progress Update STA22-017 (Pages 83 - 96)

Reporting Person – Graeme Clarke / Juan Fosco (Mazars)

8. Health and Safety Annual Report STA22-012 (Pages 97 - 114)

Reporting Person – Joanne McIntosh

9. Members' Code of Conduct STA22-015 (Pages 115 - 122)

Reporting Person – Joanne McIntosh

10. Ombudsmen Complaints STA22-016 (Pages 123 - 130)

Reporting Person – Joanne McIntosh

AGENDA ENDS

Date Published - 27 September 2022

For further information regarding this agenda and arrangements for the meeting, please contact Doug Davern on 01483 743018 or email doug.davern@woking.gov.uk



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Schedule Referred to in Declaration of Interests

Council-appointed directorships

Joanne McIntosh, Director of Legal and Democratic Services

Thameswey Limited

Thameswey Developments Limited

Thameswey Housing Limited

Thameswey Guest Houses Limited

STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE – 5 OCTOBER 2022

UPDATE ON EXTERNAL AUDIT

Executive Summary

Attached is an update on the External Audit received from the Council's External Auditor, BDO.

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to:

RESOLVE That the update be received.

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

Background Papers:	None.
Reporting Person:	Leigh Clarke, Director of Finance Email: leigh.clarke@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3277
Contact Person:	Leigh Clarke, Director of Finance Email: leigh.clarke@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3277
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STA22-013



Report to the Standards and Audit Committee
WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL

Audit Progress: year ended 31 March 2020

15 September 2022

Page 7

IDEAS | PEOPLE | TRUST



Overview

The purpose of this report is to give the Standards and Audit Committee

- An update on the progress of our audit for the year ended 31 March 2020 in the context of the wider public sector (pages 2 - 6)
- An outline of the specific factors within the public sector audit market that have contributed to the delays experienced in the completing our audit of Woking Borough Council. This includes a summary of the national position across all suppliers on unfinished audits.

Audit progress

The 2020 audit has been challenging to deliver and is not yet complete. The Council's financial statements contain a number of significant accounting estimates requiring management judgement, all of which require more detailed consideration in light of revised auditing standards and regulator focus, resulting in the need for more resource and specialist resource. Specific examples relevant to our audit of the Council include property valuations (impacting on both the Council and its subsidiaries), pension liabilities, the recoverability of loans and other debts, and PFI liabilities. These factors, together with those outlined on page 7 of this report have contributed to the delay in completion of our audit, in addition to the longer-term impacts of Covid-19 and remote working.

Notwithstanding this, we have worked with the Council's finance team to make progress on most areas of the financial statements. This work is now subject to our internal review processes. Details of these are provided at Appendix 1 of our report on page 8. This is unchanged from the position we reported to this Committee in July 2022. There are, however, a number of areas in which our audit remains in progress, and our audit is not yet sufficiently progressed to enable us to present our Audit Completion Report. The following pages provide further details of the work currently outstanding.

At the conclusion of our audit we will issue an Audit Completion Report to the Standards and Audit Committee. This will set out the results of our audit of the financial statements and use of resources comprising: audit work on key risk areas, including significant estimates and judgements made by management, critical accounting policies, any significant deficiencies in internal controls, and the presentation and disclosure in the financial statements. Based on the work we have completed to date we have no significant matters to bring to your attention

In the meantime if you would like to discuss any aspects of our report in advance of, or subsequent to, the Standards and Audit Committee meeting we would be happy to do so.

Steve Bladen

5 September 2022





Group Consolidation

The Council's group financial statements consolidates the transactions and balances relating to the Thamesway group of companies, a group of 13 subsidiary entities. As Group auditor we are required to design an audit strategy to ensure we have obtained the required audit assurance for each group component.

The accounts for the subsidiary entities were prepared and audited by Hamlyn's LLP, with the audit for the year ended 31 December 2019 being completed in October 2021. The Council provided us with group accounts in December 2021.

At the planning stage of our audit we identified a number of risks around the Council's group financial statements, including:

- The risk that due to the complexity and number of subsidiaries that there may be errors in the consolidation process and/or failure to eliminate intra-group transactions and balances.
- The subsidiary entities produce audited accounts to 31 December and there is a risk that material transactions for the remaining 3 months up to the Group year end of 31 March not be reported or valuations may be materially different.
- The subsidiary entities prepare financial statements under UK GAAP (FRS 102) rather than IFRSs and transactions and balances may require adjustment in the Group financial statements where accounting policies differ under IFRS based reporting standards.

We have undertaken an initial review of the audit working papers for the Council's subsidiary entities. However, this work is not yet complete and further work is required to conclude this element of our work. We are in the process of arranging a further review of the working papers prepared by Hamlyn's LLP.



Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy

At the conclusion of our 2018/19 audit, we raised in our Audit Completion Report an issue around the Council's MRP policy and the fact that it does not set aside any charge against the borrowing obtained to fund the loans to subsidiaries and the Victoria Square Ltd associate. The MRP strategy notes that the Council's borrowing is repaid on a back-to-back basis against loan repayments from these entities and that the business models would result in full repayment of the loans over the next 50 years.

We recommended that the Council reviews its existing MRP policy to confirm that it is compliant with the new guidance for investments supported by borrowing from 1 April 2019. We also recommended that for pre-April 2019 investments, the Council closely monitor the business plans of its subsidiaries to confirm that the loans will be fully repaid. If it considered the loans will not be repaid it would be appropriate to commence making an MRP charge against that borrowing.

We have also received an objection from a member of the public alleging that the Council's MRP policy is unlawful.

In testing the Council's MRP charge, we will undertake the following work:

- **Assess whether the Council's MRP policy complies with relevant guidance.** We requested that the Council seek legal advice on this matter. This was provided to us in late April 2022. The advice received by the Council from Legal Counsel and its Treasury Management advisors confirms that the Council's MRP policy for the 2019/20 year is compliant with relevant guidance. Importantly, however, that advice notes that where the Council deviates from the methods for calculating MRP set out in the 2018 regulations, the financial information prepared by the Council justifies that the method used has resulted in a prudent provision. We have reviewed the advice received by the Council and are satisfied that the Council's MRP policy complies with relevant guidance. However, we have not yet concluded our assessment of whether we consider the Council's MRP policy to be sufficiently prudent.
- **Assess whether the Council's policy is sufficiently prudent.** As noted above, this element of our work remains in progress.

Following the conclusion of our work in this area we will write to the objector setting out our findings.

Recoverability of loans to subsidiaries and associate

At 31 March 2020, the Council's borrowing was £732 million. This has increased significantly in recent years, and currently stands in excess of £1.8bn, the third highest for any Council in the UK in absolute terms and the highest of any Council per head of population. Approximately £1.1bn of this has been for loans to the Thameswey group of companies, or Associate Companies (Victoria Square Woking Ltd).

The Council's ability to recover these loans will depend on those subsidiary entities and associate generating sufficient profits to repay this debt.

To test the recoverability of these loans we will assess whether management's assumptions appropriately reflect the recoverability of these loans, given current economic conditions and the performance of those subsidiaries. This work remains in progress.





User of Resources

Alongside our work on the Council's financial statements, we are required to satisfy ourselves that proper arrangements have been made to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources (our value for money conclusion). Within our audit planning report we identified significant risks in relation to:

- ***Sustainable finances.*** The ongoing financial environment for local authorities is challenging, and the Council will need to deliver savings and achieve income targets to maintain financial sustainability in the medium term. There is a risk that these will not be met. Our work to address this risk remains in progress, but specifically will consider the following
 - The reasonableness of the assumptions used in the Medium Term Financial Strategy
 - The extent to which the savings identified in the Medium Term Financial Strategy have been delivered, and the Council's strategy to close budget gaps in future years;
 - The impact of the Council's significant capital programme on its budget, the adequacy of the Council's risk management plans in the event of delays to revenue generating projects, and the impact on borrowing and MRP charges. Completion of this work is closely linked to our work on the recoverability of the loans made by the Council to its subsidiary entities (see page 5).
- ***Decision making processes in relation to significant projects.*** The Council continue to work on a number of schemes that are significant in terms of its strategic, operational and financial priorities. We will assess the Council's governance arrangements over major projects. This work remains in progress.



Audit Sector developments

The sector has seen a number of pressures arising since the faster close agenda brought the reporting deadline forward for the 31 March 2019 period to 31 July 2019. Recruitment and retention of staff with suitable public sector experience has become increasingly challenging on a national level. Added to this the increased scope of audit work, increased complexity in public sector accounts and extensive regulatory requirements have continued to add to this pressure sector wide. It has been widely recognised that the audit sector, and public sector audit specifically, requires reform to enable it to remain sustainable. The Redmond review specifically focuses on recommendations to help achieve this in the longer term.

Alongside these already present pressures, a global pandemic manifested additional impacts and pressure. New challenges of remote working, onboarding and training new staff remotely, communication, IT support and illness within the team directly impacting efficiency and delivery.

We have set out below the current position on audit completions nationally.

2018/19

Only 60% of local government bodies were able to publish audited accounts by the deadline of 31 July 2019. By exception, there remain a small number of 2018/19 audits outstanding to date (13 bodies, representing 3% of bodies). This is unchanged from the figure reported to this Committee in July 2022. We issued our auditor's report on the Council's 2018/19 financial statements in November 2020.

2019/20

The publication deadline for years ending 31 March 2020, initially pushed back to end September 2020 from July 2020, was then further extended to 30 November 2020. However, only 45% of local government bodies were able to publish audited accounts by this extended deadline, with even authorities which traditionally have been completed in advance of the deadline close to or at the deadline date.

As at 31 March 2022 opinions were outstanding for 51 bodies (11%). This figure includes Woking Borough Council. This is unchanged from the figure reported to this Committee in July 2022.

2020/21

The 31 March 2021 publication deadline was set at end September 2021. Audit firms and audit regulation bodies did feedback that this was not realistically achievable. Only 9% of 2021 audits were completed by 30 September 2021, 20% by 30 November 2021, 40% by 31 December 2021, and 52% by March 2022. By June 2022 the figure had risen to 58% (276 bodies).

APPENDIX 1: PROGRESS

Work substantially completed

Work on the following areas of the financial statements is now substantially complete and are now subject to our internal review processes. This is unchanged from the position we reported to this Committee in July 2022.

- ▶ Investments
- ▶ Accrued interest on receivables and interest income received
- ▶ Sample testing of credit notes
- ▶ Borrowings
- ▶ Grant receipts in advance
- ▶ VAT review
- ▶ Pensions liability
- ▶ Cut off testing across income and expenditure
- ▶ Recharges and overheads
- ▶ Grant Income received
- ▶ Testing on a sample of other income and expenditure items not tested elsewhere
- ▶ Journals
- ▶ Related party transactions
- ▶ Cash & bank reconciliation
- ▶ Capital commitments
- ▶ Asset existence
- ▶ Depreciation
- ▶ Assets transferred
- ▶ Operating leases
- ▶ Asset disclosure notes
- ▶ Asset disposals
- ▶ Assets under construction
- ▶ Expenditure completeness
- ▶ Interest payments
- ▶ Housing benefits expenditure
- ▶ Payroll
- ▶ Housing Revenue Account (including income and expenditure testing, system reconciliations, disclosures in the accounts)
- ▶ Cash flows statement
- ▶ Review of minutes
- ▶ Repairs and maintenance
- ▶ REFCUS
- ▶ Income completeness

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

STEVE BLADEN

t: +44 (0)20 3860 6563

m: +44 (0)7870 514535

e: steve.bladen@bdo.co.uk

The matters raised in our report prepared in connection with the audit are those we believe should be brought to your attention. They do not purport to be a complete record of all matters arising. This report is prepared solely for the use of the Council and may not be quoted nor copied without our prior written consent. No responsibility to any third party is accepted.

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STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE – 5 OCTOBER 2022

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2021-22

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.

Reporting Persons: Joanne McIntosh, Director of Legal and Democratic Services
Email: joanne.mcintosh@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3038

Leigh Clarke, Finance Director
Email: leigh.clarke@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3277

Contact Persons: Joanne McIntosh, Director of Legal and Democratic Services
Email: joanne.mcintosh@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3038

Leigh Clarke, Finance Director
Email: leigh.clarke@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3277

Date Published: 27 September 2022

STA22-014

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.
- 1.7 To support the Annual Governance Statement, attached is a Local Code of Corporate Governance, which shall be included in the Council's Constitution during its review. The Code sets out for members and officers the main principles of good governance for Woking Borough Council. A Copy of the Code can be found at Appendix 3 to this report.

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

Woking Borough Council

Annual Governance Statement

2021 - 2022

Shaping the *future* of our borough



1. Scope of Responsibility

Woking Borough Council is responsible for ensuring that:

- Its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards
- Public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and
- Resources are used economically, efficiently and effectively

The Council 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 Council 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 Council 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 Council 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 Council is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Council 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 Council's relationship with customers and residents. Trust in public services is also influenced by the quality of services received and also by how open and honest a Council is about its activities.

A framework for the implementation of good governance allows the Council 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 governance framework has been in place at the Council for the year ended 31 March 2022 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 Council’s governance arrangements are documented in a detailed supporting analysis.

The system of internal control is a significant part of the 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.

3. Review of Effectiveness

The Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework.

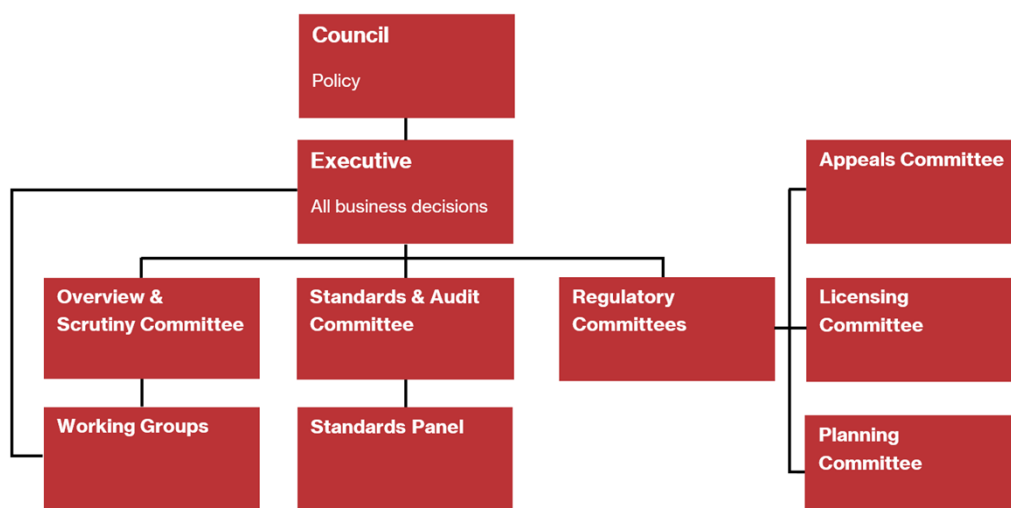
The arrangements required for gathering assurances for the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement provide an opportunity for the Council to consider the robustness of the governance arrangements in place and to consider this as a corporate issue that affects all parts of the Council. It also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

The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the Corporate Leadership Team and Senior Managers within the Council 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 Council is operating within local and statutory frameworks and have approved this statement.

4. The Governance Framework

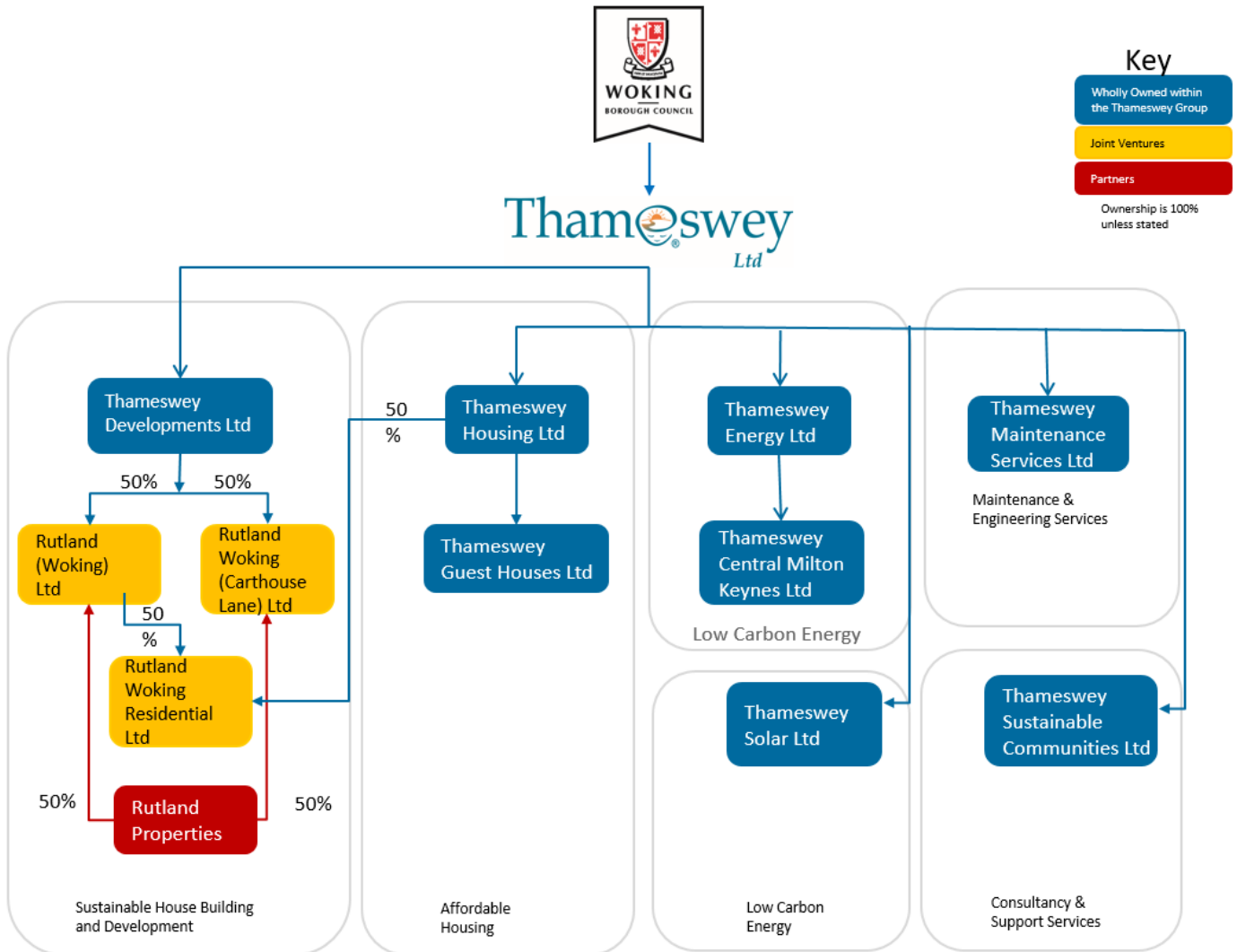
The Council operates a Leader and Executive system of governance, with an Overview and Scrutiny Committee in place to scrutinise the work of the Executive.



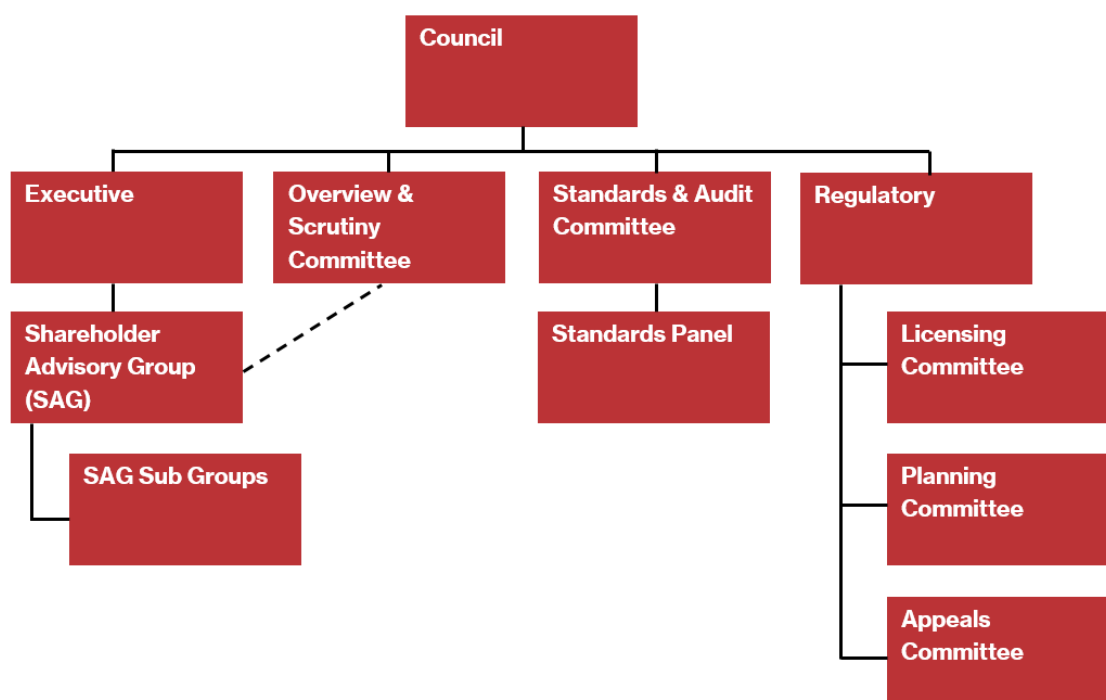
Company Governance

The Council uses a company structure to deliver Council objectives in a more efficient and effective manner. Company business plans are approved by the Council and performance reported through the Council’s Green Book performance monitoring, and to Council working groups. The ThamsEwey

Group, shown below, delivers housing and environmental objectives for the Council. The Council also manages Brookwood Cemetery and the Victoria Place regeneration through company structures.



During 2021/22 there were Councillor, Officer and Independent Directors of the companies in accordance with the Company protocol adopted by the Council. A revised governance system was approved by the Council in July 2022, based on best practice guidance, which removes Councillor Directors, creates a Shareholder Advisory Group to provide oversight of Company activities and appoints the Leader of the Council as the Council's Shareholder Representative.



Governance Framework Principles

There are seven principles and sub-principles of Corporate Governance adopted by the Council as set out below. Assurance for how they are met is provided in following sections, supported by further detail in Appendix 1.

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

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

Assured

The Council has high standards for sound governance as set out in law and government guidance. It promotes a culture of compliance.

The Council's codes of conduct set out expectations and requirements for behaving with integrity for both Members and officers. Action was taken to promote these and provide assurance that they continue to be implemented fully and correctly.

The Standards and Audit Committee oversees the democratic arrangements of the Council and reviews and advises Full Council on maintaining high standards. The Responsibility for Functions (including the Scheme of Delegation) and Standing Orders require Members and officers to ensure that all decisions are compliant with internal policies and procedures, as well as with the law. These help ensure transparent decision-making, giving authority and certainty to the allocation of responsibilities as set out in the Constitution.

Part 5 of the Constitution contains the Code of Conduct for Members. In April 2021 the Council adopted the Local Government Association's Model Code of Conduct as revised during the year. To support the adoption of the new Code of Conduct a thorough review of the The Arrangements for Dealing with Allegations of Misconduct by Councillors under the Localism Act 2021 was undertaken. Following stakeholder engagement with all Councillors the new arrangements were adopted by Full Council.

The code of conduct defines the standards of behaviour for Members. The Monitoring Officer provides annual training on the Member Code of Conduct and is available to discuss any matter arising throughout the year. Member conduct is monitored by the Standards and Audit Committee, which has a remit to deal with complaints of breaches of the Member Code of Conduct through the Standards Panel. All Members complete the register of interests and it is a standing item on all formal meeting agendas for both officers and Members.

A parallel Code of Conduct for officers sits in the suite of employee policies. The Council's Constitution contains an Officer Conflicts of Interest Protocol 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 a comprehensive staff handbook and Behaviour and Skills Framework setting out the Council'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.

Both codes for Members and Officers 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.

Decision-making is supported by advice from officers and internal guidance that should ensure compliance with policies.

The statutory roles of the Chief Financial Officer (s.151 officer) and the Monitoring Officer are set out in the Constitution and in the scheme of delegation. They provide oversight of propriety and lawfulness. They form part of the Corporate Leadership Team and there are regular Statutory Officer meetings with the Chief Executive.

The Council's Contract Standing Orders and the Financial Regulations provide rules for lawful and sound processes for contract and spending decisions. These are managed by the Monitoring Officer, and Chief Financial Officer. These Standing Orders help ensure transparency and a Governance framework in relation to how decisions are made.

The Council 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.

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

Assured

The Council exists to serve its residents and is dependent on a wide range of stakeholders for working effectively in partnership. Consultation and engagement mechanisms are in place and are used effectively. The Council has clear decision-making processes and rules and procedures to enforce them which emphasise openness and transparency. This has been tested and shown to be resilient during the pandemic and its impact on ways of working

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

The Council is the ultimate decision-making body and the principal forum for political debate. 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. Agendas and reports for Cabinet and committee meetings, unless considered exempt from publication, are published at least five clear working days in advance – exceptions are explained in public documents.

The Council sets the Policies and Strategies for the Council 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 Council 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 Council are discharged through its non-executive committees and the Standards and Audit Committee.

The Forward Plan describes all significant (key) decisions planned to be taken in the following four months and is published and updated at least monthly. The Forward Plan is used by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to help plan business. This ensures early awareness of, and engagement with, all Members. Decision-making operates with a presumption of openness.

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.

The Council is committed to working with residents, businesses, communities, service users, and partners to help prioritise what it does, to give them a say over the approach and to have the chance to get involved in delivery and change. This requires sound arrangements for engagement and consultation.

The Council uses a variety of ways to engage residents and other stakeholders - publications (printed and digital), press releases and social media to keep people informed of plans or decisions, and engagement via questionnaires, public events, workshops, focus groups, satisfaction surveys and feedback forms and has introduced an online 'Civic' forum to more officially engage with residents.

Formal consultation will be undertaken where there is a statutory duty or legitimate expectation and where there is a service or policy need to do so.

The Council has taken significant action has been taken to increase the effectiveness of public engagement and communication over the past year and to ensure that engagement is embedded into the Council's culture and working practices.

The Council works with a range of stakeholders. This includes a range of public bodies, local authorities, the NHS, and Surrey Police. Other tiers of local government are important partners in many areas of service delivery, strategic planning, and community development. There are both formal and informal forums in place for regular liaison with elected Members and senior officers in the neighbouring district and borough councils, including regular meetings of all the leaders of the councils to discuss issues of common interest.

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

Assured

The Council has established arrangements to define outcomes and monitor performance against agreed measures. These cover the Council strategic aims

In setting policies and strategies, the Council takes a long-term view of outcomes, taking into account sustainable economic, social, and environmental aims and has effective, comprehensive performance monitoring in place.

The corporate document 'the Corporate Plan' was adopted by the Council in March 2021. Resident engagement was carried out during the year to develop a Corporate Strategy to cover the period 2022-27 and performance will be monitored in a structured, timely and transparent way.

The Council exists to serve its residents and is dependent on a wide range of stakeholders for working effectively in partnership.

Consultation and engagement mechanisms are in place and are used effectively. The Council has clear decision-making processes and rules and procedures to enforce them which emphasise openness and transparency.

The Council has adopted a Corporate Strategy for 2022-2027. The Woking for All strategy commits the Council to a set of strategic objectives between 2022 and 2027 that give clear direction to residents, businesses, partner organisations and council staff, based around four community-based themes.

- Healthier Communities
- Engaged Communities
- Greener Communities
- Prospering Communities

Underpinning these community-based themes is an overarching 'high performing council' theme which ensures the council delivers the best outcomes from its funds and assets.

A supplementary strategy that sets out the new administration's key priorities for the year ahead was adopted by the Executive on 16 June 2022 and by Council on 21st July 2022.

The Woking for All supplementary and amended priorities strategy sets out 23 key policy priorities for 2022 and 2023 which complement the Woking for all 2022/27 strategy, adopted earlier in 2022.

Development of the strategy followed a series of community engagement roadshows held during November and December 2021, complimented by a comprehensive online public questionnaire hosted on the council's engagement hub, Woking Community Forum.

Key priorities identified by communities during this process helped develop the strategic objectives for the next five years, as well as the priority actions for 2022 and 2023, providing a comprehensive and integrated approach to service and financial planning.

The Woking for All strategy will be reviewed annually to ensure the strategic objectives remain relevant and annual priority actions to deliver the objectives are agreed and set.

The Corporate Strategy 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 Council 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. The Economic Development Action Plan was approved in September 2021. It is an interim plan to take us to 2023 when a new or updated economic development strategy will be adopted. This Economic Development Action Plan complements key strategies and plans we have already published including the Core Strategy, the Economic Development Strategy for Woking 2017-2022 and the 2021/2022 Corporate Plan.

The Action Plan addresses key issues arising from the pandemic and it will also support the forthcoming Woking Town Centre Masterplan. The Woking Town Centre Masterplan will provide the overall vision for the Town Centre that will drive investment decisions in a coherent and sustainable manner and ensure that Woking continues to be a destination of choice.

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 investments.

Active monitoring of performance is undertaken through regular reviews of Directorate Service plans and with all staff through individual staff performance conversations. 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 Council's website.

The Council 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-pandemic economic environment it will be necessary to revisit this strategy and explore operational efficiencies, learning from others and embracing digital innovation wherever possible.

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

Assured

The Council takes decisions on interventions based on the priorities agreed in the Council's Corporate Strategy and supporting policy documents. In areas identified for improvement systems for governance, oversight, and scrutiny of interventions will continue to be given particular focus.

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.

The MTFS was updated regularly during 2021/22 recognising that the Covid-19 crisis had caused significant financial uncertainty which required a revised strategy to establish a sustainable future plan. The MTFS was last updated in July 2022 and this regular reporting shall continue as part of the Council's integrated service and financial planning cycle.

Directorate 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 Council has established The Fit for the Future programme which establishes a new way of working to explore operational efficiencies, learning from others and engineering digital innovation.

Executive decision reports provide a public record of all significant decisions to implement service plans and spend. They are required to show the intended outcomes, the rationale for the proposal, implications for Council resources, other options considered, advice received, consultation undertaken and how risks are managed.

The Council 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

Assured

Officers and Members are expected to have a clear sense of their purpose, roles, and responsibilities in line with the Council's vision and the suite of policies and processes which support it.

The Chief Executive and the Corporate Leadership Team manage the Council's workforce, skills and resource planning. All officers are expected to have their performance monitored and their development needs identified and addressed. Specific attention is paid to programmes for leadership development. The Council runs a leadership programme to encourage junior/mid-level managers to develop the skills required for senior leadership positions.

A system is in place to ensure that all elected Members have an understanding of their roles and responsibilities when appointed or elected to particular positions within the Council. Members are expected to be able to fulfil the expectations and demands of their roles as local Members and those positions to which they may be appointed.

Arrangements for the Council's Member appointments to specific roles are open and set out in the Constitution. The Council elects the Leader who decides the composition and responsibilities of the Executive. The Council makes appointments to all committees. All terms of reference are published in the Constitution.

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 and was assessed for reaccreditation in 2018 and was again awarded the Charter. The Council is committed to continually improving its member development programme.

Statutory roles include the designation of the Chief Executive as Head of Paid Service, the Director of Democratic and Legal Services as the Monitoring Officer and the Finance Director as s.151 officer.

Personal development priorities are agreed through a personal development review process. The Performance and Development Review process is embedded in the Council 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. There is an established programme of induction training for new staff. Training is available increasingly through an online learning system.

The Council was assessed by Investors in People during 2019/20. The Council retained an accreditation at the 'Silver' level and also received the Health and Wellbeing Good Practice Award. The Council is currently going through the assessment process.

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

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

Assured

Risk management is robust and risks are being considered during business planning and decision-making processes, corporately and across all services.

The Council has robust internal financial controls in place, displays strong public financial management and operates systems to manage risks and performance in the most effective manner.

The Constitution sets out the rules to ensure robust internal control over the Council's finances. The system and arrangements for financial performance management and budget monitoring demonstrate sound internal monitoring and control and have formal and well published arrangements for Member and officer oversight and transparency.

The system of internal financial control is based upon a framework of comprehensive financial regulations and procedures 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

The Council's financial management arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA 'Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government 2010'.

The Council adopted an updated Risk Management policy in September 2021 to ensure that the Council's approach to risk management reflects best practice, and remains an essential component of strong governance and robust business management. The appropriate management of risk is a fundamental element of the Council's ability to provide cost effective, quality services and to deliver its corporate priority outcomes. To achieve this, sound risk management practices are firmly embedded within the culture of the Council, providing a proportionate and effective mechanism for the identification, assessment and, where appropriate, management of risk. 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 Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

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.

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

Assured

The Council has transparent processes in place through publication of the Forward Plan of key decisions, of agendas and reports of its meetings and those of its committees. This includes key decision reports on the website.

The Council has effective, open data reporting arrangements to ensure the accessibility of significant spend, contractual and other data relevant to financial performance.

All meetings of the Full Council and of the committees which discharge executive, non executive or scrutiny functions take place in public and have their reports and minutes published on the Council's website. Decisions, agendas and reports are published on the website and are available to the press and public. This is driven by the publication of the Forward Plan of key decisions. A limited number of reports are considered in private session only when the subject meets the prescribed criteria.

The Standards and Audit Committee undertakes the functions of an audit committee. This includes review of the findings of Internal Audit. The Committee meets regularly and in public and holds officers to account for the timely implementation of agreed audit actions.

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.

The Council 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.

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.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The Council 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 Council 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. The Council has recently established the Shareholder Advisory Group to exercise its shareholder function.

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 Council is structured to provide clear responsibility and accountability at both strategic (Corporate Leadership Team, CLT) and operational (Senior Manager) levels.

The CLT comprises the Chief Executive, Strategic Director - Corporate Resources, Strategic Director-Communities, Strategic Director – Place, Finance Director and the Director of Democratic and Legal Services. Each has 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 Council acts in accordance with the Constitution. The Finance Director is nominated in accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.

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. Assurance and Significant Governance Issues

No assurance can ever be absolute; however, this Statement seeks to provide a reasonable assurance that there are no significant weaknesses in the Council's governance arrangements.

On the basis of the review of the sources of assurance set out in this Statement and Appendices, we are satisfied that the Council has in place satisfactory governance arrangements, including a satisfactory system of internal control, both of which are operating effectively.

The Annual Internal Audit Annual Report and Opinion provides an opinion on the adequacy of the Council's control environment as a contribution to the proper, economic, efficient and effective use of resources. The Council must undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance.

The Council will continue to regularly monitor issues that may seriously prejudice or prevent achievement of its key objectives through its strategic risk review process.

Both governance and internal control arrangements must be kept under review to ensure that they continue to operate effectively, meet changing legislative needs and reflect best practice and our intention to achieve excellence in all our activities. The Council has identified the following areas for enhancement of the Council's governance requiring action in order to ensure arrangements remain robust for the future:

- **Constitutional Review**
A thorough review of the Council's Constitution is underway.

- **Internal Audit**
Internal Audit are conducting a review of the Council's Governance Arrangements. Any improvement identified shall be considered and actioned.

- **Company Governance**
Ensure that the recently adopted Company Governance Arrangements are implemented.

- **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 Council 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 Ann-Marie Barker
Date

Chief Executive
J Fisher
Date

Annual Governance Statement

2021-2022

Supporting information

Shaping the *future* of our borough



How Woking Borough Council intends to meet the Principles of Good Corporate Governance

This Appendix sets out how Woking Borough Council aims to work to the principles of good Corporate Governance.

What is Corporate Governance?

Good governance is how the Council ensures that it is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. It comprises the systems, processes, cultures and values by which the Council is directed and controlled. Through effective governance the Council is accountable to, engages with and, where applicable, leads the community.

The Council is committed to the principles of good governance, and has adopted the seven core principles of the CIPFA and SOLACE framework as follows:

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

What are the benefits of having a Code of Corporate Governance?

Good governance leads to good management, good performance, good stewardship of public money, good public engagement and ultimately good outcomes for citizens and service users. It enables the Council to pursue its vision effectively as well as underpinning that vision with mechanisms

for control and the management of risk. The Council has a robust governance framework in place. The documents and arrangements which comprise the framework demonstrate that the Council continually seeks to ensure it is and remains, well governed, through integration of its processes and structures with the core principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE framework into all aspects of the Council’s conduct and operation.

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

Summary:

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

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
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	<p>The statutory roles of the Chief Finance Officer (s151 Officer) and Monitoring Officer are set out in the Constitution. They provide oversight of propriety and lawfulness.</p> <p>The Council and its Officers maintain shared values. These are defined in the Constitution and reflect public expectations about the conduct and behaviour of individuals.</p> <p>The Council has adopted formal codes of conduct defining standards of personal behaviour for Members and Officers.</p> <p>The Council has a complaints procedure, details of which are on the Council’s website.</p>	<p>The Constitution which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Procedure Rules • Contract Standing Orders • Members Code of Conduct • Officer Employment Procedure Rules • Code of Conduct for Employees <p>Register of Members Interests</p> <p>Employee Policies which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee Handbook • Staff Induction Procedure • Staff briefings <p>Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy Anti-Bribery Policy</p> <p>Corporate Complaints Policy</p>

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements

What we have in place

Evidence

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.

The Constitution which includes:

- Members Code of Conduct
- Arrangements for dealing with Standards Allegations
- Scheme of delegation to Officers
- Officer Employment Procedure Rules
- Code of Conduct for Employees

Register of Members Interests

Employee Handbook
Staff Induction Procedure
Staff briefings

Members Induction and refresher Training which includes Code of Conduct and Probity in Planning

Leading by example and using the above standard operating principles or values as a framework for decision making and other actions

The responsibility for functions and standing orders require Members and officers to ensure that all decisions are compliant with internal policies and procedures as well as the law. 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 which includes:-

- Part 2 – articles of the Constitution
- Part 3 – Responsibility for functions, Management Arrangements and Scheme of Delegations
- Part 5 – Codes and Protocols

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 function

HR Policies which includes the PDR Framework

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
	Internal Audit review for appropriate and regularly updated policies, and undertake specific work in areas such as gifts and hospitality.	
Seeking to establish, monitor and maintain the organisation's ethical standards and performance	<p>We have put in place arrangements to ensure that Members and Officers of the Council are not influenced by prejudice, bias or conflicts of interest in dealing with different stakeholders. We have put in place appropriate measures to ensure that these arrangements are workable including the declarations of interests.</p> <p>The Standards and Audit Committee oversees the democratic arrangements of the Council and takes the lead in ensuring high standards of conduct are embedded within the Council's culture.</p> <p>Guidance and advise is provided to members and officers together with a comprehensive training programme.</p>	<p>Members Code of Conduct Members Induction Training and Annual Mandatory Training Code of Conduct for Employees Policy</p> <p>Employee Handbook Staff Induction Procedure Staff briefings</p> <p>Standards and Audit Committee</p>
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 Members and 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>The Constitution which includes:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members Code of Conduct • Code of Conduct for Employees Policy • Code of Conduct for Employees Policy • Officer Employment Procedure Rules <p>Employee Handbook Staff Induction Procedure Members Induction Training</p>

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
	We also have a number of HR policies such as Anti bullying and Whistleblowing that relate to conduct and personal behaviour.	Anti Bullying Policy Whistleblowing Policy Equality and Diversity Policy, Training and Monitoring
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 Council ensures that systems and processes for financial administration and control together with protection of the Council's resources and assets comply with ethical standards; and are subject to monitoring of their effectiveness.</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.</p> <p>The Council has a confidential reporting 'whistleblowing' policy which is accessible via the intranet and internet.</p>	<p>The Constitution which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members Code of Conduct • Arrangements for dealing with Standards Allegations • Scheme of delegation to Officers • Officer Employment Procedure Rules • Code of Conduct for Employees • Officer Conflicts of Interest Protocol <p>Anti Bully Policy Whistleblowing Policy Equality and Diversity Policy, Training and Monitoring</p> <p>Register of Interests Declarations of Interest</p>
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	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.	Corporate Strategy and Policy documents Contractual negotiations

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
	<p>Expectations are incorporated into contractual arrangements where appropriate and addressed at contract meetings.</p>	
<p>Ensuring members and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of the law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations</p>	<p>The statutory roles of the Chief Finance Officer (s151 Officer) and Monitoring Officer are set out in the Constitution. They provide oversight of propriety and lawfulness. The Council's Monitoring Officer, responsible for ensuring the Council acts in accordance with the Constitution.</p> <p>The Council ensures that professional advice on matters that have legal and/or financial implications is available and recorded well in advance of decision making.</p> <p>Officers will actively recognize the limits of lawful activity placed on them but also strive to utilise their powers to the full benefit of their communities.</p> <p>Officers will observe all specific legislative requirements placed upon the Council as well as the requirements of general law, in particular – rationality, legality and natural justice into the procedures and decision making.</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 undertake activities for the benefit of its community and seeks to make full use of these.</p>	<p>Role of Monitoring Officer</p> <p>Inclusion of Legal and Financial advice in Committee Reports</p> <p>The Constitution</p> <p>Annual Governance Statement</p> <p>Internal and External Audit</p> <p>Corporate Complaints Policy</p>

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
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	<p>The Constitution sets out the responsibilities of the statutory officers.</p> <p>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).</p> <p>CLT meets weekly, there are regular meetings between the Chief Executive and Leader and with portfolio holders to discuss and challenge proposals.</p>	<p>The Constitution which includes:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part 3 – Responsibility for functions, Management Arrangements and Scheme of Delegations <p>Chief Officers Meetings</p>
Striving to optimize the use of the full powers available for the benefit of citizens, communities and other stakeholders	<p>The Council has adopted a Corporate Strategy which sets key strategic objectives for the next five years, as well as the priority actions for 2022 and 2023, providing a comprehensive and integrated approach to service and financial planning. 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, in line with the Council's Corporate Strategy. These actions are outlined in the Directorate Service Plans and closely monitored.</p>	<p>Corporate Strategy Directorate Service Plans</p> <p>The PDR Framework</p>
Dealing with breaches of legal and regulatory provisions effectively	<p>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.</p> <p>We have put in place effective systems to protect the rights of staff. We ensure that policies for whistleblowing are accessible to</p>	<p>Monitoring Officer</p> <p>Money Laundering Policy Whistleblowing Policy</p>

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements

What we have in place

Evidence

staff and those contracting with the Council, and arrangements are in place to support whistle blowers.

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.

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.

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 register of interests is a public document and is available on the Council's website.

- Monitoring Officer
- Corporate Complaints Procedure
- Standards and Audit Committee
- The Constitution
- The PDR Framework

Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Summary:

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

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
Ensuring an open culture through documenting and communicating the organisation's commitment to openness	<p>The Council is committed to openness, support and respect. This commitment is included in the Corporate Strategy.</p> <p>The Council's policies are developed in consultation with the local community and other key stakeholders, and are clearly articulated and disseminated.</p> <p>The Council is the principal decision making body and forum for political debate. All Council meetings take place in public and are webcast.</p> <p>The forward plan describes all significant (key decisions) to be taken by the Executive and is published and updated monthly. The forward plan is used by the overview and Scrutiny Committee to help plan business.</p> <p>Decision making operates with a presumption of openness. Agendas and reports for formal meetings, unless considered exempt from publication, are held on our website.</p> <p>The council complies with statutory requirements regarding access e.g. to</p>	<p>Corporate Strategy Directorate Service Plans</p> <p>The Forward Plan and Openness and access to meetings/decisions</p> <p>Data Protection Policy and Publication Scheme</p> <p>Internal and External Communications Strategy</p> <p>Green Book - Performance Management</p>

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
	<p>financial information and responses to Freedom of Information requests.</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>The Green Book performance monitoring and financial information is published monthly and also available on the Council website.</p>	
<p>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>	<p>Decision making operates with a presumption of openness with decisions only made confidential with specific documented reasons provided. Items held in Part II of the agenda are kept to a minimum where there is 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.</p> <p>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>The Constitution which includes:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidentiality Protocol <p>Part II Register</p>
<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 maintains a culture of accountability so that Members and Officers understand to whom they are accountable and for what.</p>	<p>The Constitution – Scheme of Delegation</p> <p>Openness and Access to meetings and decisions.</p>

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
	<p>Reports are published on the Council's website and formal meetings webcast. All Council and Committee reports are published under Part 1 – Open for inspection to the public – unless there is a legitimate need to preserve confidentiality on the basis of the statutory tests.</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. Project documentation includes reasoning, justification of the project and post project impact assessment.</p>	<p>Agenda and Minutes of Formal Council Meetings</p> <p>Live Webcast and retention of recording for a 4 year period.</p>
Using formal and informal consultation and engagement to determine the most appropriate and effective intervention/courses of action	The Council has taken steps to ensure that engagement is at the forefront of everything that the Council does. It strives to engage with stakeholders on an individual and collective basis to demonstrate that we deliver services and outcomes that meet the needs and expectations of the public. These arrangements recognize that different sections of the community have different priorities and establish robust processes for dealing with these competing demands.	Corporate Strategy
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	The Council works with a range of stakeholders. This includes a range of public bodies, local authorities, the NHS and Surrey Police. It also includes commercial partners, suppliers, other public and third sector organisations or organisations to which they are accountable.	

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
	<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>	
<p>Developing formal and informal partnerships to allow for resources to be used more efficiently and outcomes achieved more effectively</p>	<p>The Council has set out its commitment to working in partnership with residents, business, communities, the voluntary sector, and local authority partners through a number of initiatives.</p> <p>These include the delivery of a number of services, where outcomes can be achieved more efficiently and effectively, by third part contractors. Close relationships have been developed with those providers of the outsourced provision such as Leisure.</p> <p>The Council has worked in partnership with 3 other Surrey Districts to create a joint waste solution, 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>Corporate Strategy</p> <p>Group Company Structure</p> <p>Business Liaison</p>

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements

What we have in place

Evidence

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.

The Council supports Community Groups and local partners through its grant scheme.

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.

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.

There are regular meetings with the Woking Chamber of Commerce.

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.

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. The Council's Corporate Strategy and the Companies Business Plans shall align to ensure a joint commitment to change and delivery.

A new Company Governance model has been agreed to ensure that the Council monitor and challenges the companies to

Group Company Structure and Governance

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements

What we have in place

Evidence

ensure that the partnerships is aligned and delivering the Council's vision.

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.

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

The Council is committed to working with residents, businesses, communities, service users and partners to help prioritise what it does, to give them a say over the approach and to have the chance to get involved in delivery and change. This requires sound arrangements for engagement and consultation.

Corporate Strategy

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.

Formal consultation shall be undertaken where there is a statutory duty.

Ensuring that communication methods are effective, and that members and officers are clear about their roles with regard to community engagement

The Council ensures that it is open and accessible to the community, service users and staff and is committed to openness and transparency in all dealings.

Corporate Strategy

Engagement Plans

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements

What we have in place

Evidence

The Council uses a variety of ways to engage residents and other stakeholders – publications (printed and digital) press releases and social media to keep people informed of plans and decisions and engagements via public events, workshops, focus groups, surveys and feedback forms. New engagement software, Woking Community Forum, has been introduced to enhance community engagement and consultation.

Encouraging, collecting and evaluating the views and experiences of communities, citizens, service users and organisations of different backgrounds including reference to future needs.

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.

Corporate Strategy
Engagement Plans
Residents Panel

The Residents' Panel was re-launched in 2020 and a programme of engagement is being established for 2021.

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.

The Council participates in and actively supports and consults with disabled groups to help frame policy and services.

Resources are in place to ensure community engagement is managed strategically and the Council has staff who are trained facilitators offering a range of

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
	<p>skills to engage appropriately with different groups and sections of the community. Where necessary appropriate use is made of specialist resources to engage with particular cultures, languages, disabilities, etc.</p> <p>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</p>	
Implementing effective feedback mechanisms in order to demonstrate how views have been taken into account	<p>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.</p>	Corporate Complaints Procedure
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.	
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.	Corporate Strategy and supporting Policies Woking 2027 MTFS

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

Summary:

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

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The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
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	<p>The Council has established arrangements to define outcomes and monitor performance against agreed measures. The Council’s Corporate Strategy outlines the Council’s key strategic over the next five years. This is supported by Directorate Service Plans. Performance will be monitored in a structured, timely and transparent way by CLT and the Executive.</p> <p>The Council publishes reports to communicate the Council’s activities and achievements, its financial position and performance.</p> <p>The Corporate Strategy and Directorate Service Plans feed into PDR objective setting following the ‘golden thread’</p>	<p>The Corporate Strategy and policy documents.</p> <p>Directorate Service Plans and Monitoring</p> <p>The PDR Framework.</p>
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	The Council ensures that those making decisions are provided with financial and non-financial information that is fit for purpose, relevant, timely and gives clear expectations of technical issues and their implications.	Council and Committee Agenda and Minutes

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
Delivering defined outcomes on a sustainable basis within the resources that will be available	<p>Performance management is well imbedded at the Council with detailed reporting published and publicly available each month.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Other decisions are made in the context of the MTFS.</p>	<p>MTFS</p> <p>Programme Management Board and Reporting</p>
Identifying and managing risks to the achievement of outcomes	<p>The Council ensures that the Directorate Service and Corporate Risk Registers are regularly reviewed.</p>	<p>Programme Management Board and Reporting</p> <p>Risk Registers</p>
Managing service users' expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available	<p>Service Users expectations are 'managed' by advising of the Council's priorities through the Corporate Strategy and Directorate Planning process. There are ongoing dialogues with groups regarding the best uses of the resources available.</p>	<p>Corporate Strategy Directorate Service Plans</p>
Considering and balancing the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies and plans when taking decisions about service provision	<p>The balancing of economic, social and environmental factors is extensively considered as part of the decision making process. The Council maintains a prudential financial framework, which balances commitments with available resources; and monitors income and expenditure levels to ensure this balance is achieved.</p> <p>The Council ensures compliance with the CIPFA codes regarding a prudential framework for Capital Finance and Treasury Management.</p>	<p>Corporate Strategy Directorate Service Plans</p> <p>MTFS</p> <p>Programme Management Board</p> <p>Regular budget reporting</p> <p>Internal and external audit</p>
Taking a longer-term view with regard to decision making, taking account of risk and acting	<p>In setting policies and strategies, the Council takes a long term view of outcomes, taking</p>	<p>Corporate Strategy Directorate Service Plans</p>

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
transparently where there are potential conflicts between the organisation's intended outcomes and short-term factors such as the political cycle or financial constraints	<p>into account sustainable economic, social and environmental aims and has effective comprehensive performance monitoring in place. The Council's Corporate Strategy outlines the Council's key strategic over the next five years.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The Capital Strategy and Investment Programme demonstrate the Council's longer term view.</p>	MTFS Capital Strategy and Investment Programme
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.	Corporate Strategy Directorate Service Plans Extensive Engagement Programme
Ensuring fair access to services	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.	Equalities and Diversity Policy and Reporting

Determining the interventions necessary to optimize the achievement of the intended outcomes

Summary:

Local government achieves its intended outcomes by providing a mixture of legal, regulatory, and practical interventions. Determining the right mix of these courses of action is a critically important strategic choice that local government has to make to ensure intended outcomes are achieved

They need robust decision-making mechanisms to ensure that their defined outcomes can be achieved in a way that provides the best trade-off between the various types of resource inputs while still enabling effective and efficient operations. Decisions made need to be reviewed continually to ensure that achievement of outcomes is optimised.

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
<p>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</p>	<p>The Corporate Strategy clearing outlines the Council's priorities over the next five years and is used as the basis for corporate and service planning.</p> <p>The Constitution outlines a clear process for decision making.</p> <p>Executive and Council reports contain detailed information to support decision making and provide options on the course of action. The report format is standard providing information in a consistent and comprehensive way.</p> <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.</p>	<p>Corporate Strategy</p> <p>The Constitution</p> <p>Executive Decision Process Forward Plan</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>Reviews of service needs inform strategies. The Corporate Strategy was introduced following an extensive engagement exercise. Services shall prioritise services through the Corporate Strategy and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) cycle during 2022/2023 together with the Council's Fit for the Future Programme.</p>	<p>Corporate Strategy</p> <p>Directorate Service Plans</p> <p>PDR Framework</p> <p>MTFS</p> <p>Fit for the Future Programme</p>

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
Establishing and implementing robust planning and control cycles that cover strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets	<p>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.</p> <p>The Council has effective arrangements to deal with a failure in service deliver and explore options for improving service delivery and outcomes for our residents.</p>	<p>Corporate Strategy Directorate Service Plans PDR Framework</p> <p>The Green Book Performance Management</p>
Engaging with internal and external stakeholders in determining how services and other courses of action should be planned and delivered	<p>The Corporate Strategy was introduced following an extensive engagement exercise.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Corporate Strategy Engagement Plans</p>
Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively including shared risks	<p>The Council is experienced in working closely with partners and will identify and monitor risks through an appropriate review mechanism.</p> <p>The Council has risk management arrangements in place including mitigating actions to support the achievement of the Council's intended outcomes.</p> <p>The Council has prepared contingency arrangements including disaster recovery plans and business continuity plans to ensure resilience in delivering services, for example during extreme weather.</p>	<p>Programme Management Board and Reporting</p> <p>Company Governance Arrangements</p> <p>Contract Performance management</p> <p>Emergency and Resilience Plans</p>
Ensuring arrangements are flexible and agile so that the mechanisms for delivering goods and	The Council, where appropriate, builds flexibility into contractual (or other) arrangements with third party providers of	

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
services can be adapted to changing circumstances	<p>goods and services. Larger contracts will have formal change control clauses, with smaller contracts allowing more informal change management through dialogue.</p> <p>The Council has a responsive management style and will make appropriate changes as circumstances dictate building strong relationships with providers which enable flexibility.</p>	
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	<p>The Council's Corporate Strategy outlines the Council's key strategic over the next five years. This is supported by Directorate Service Plans. Performance will be monitored in a structured, timely and transparent way by CLT and the Executive.</p> <p>Efficiency improvements and income generating assets have been identified to enable the maintenance of service delivery.</p> <p>External Audit continues to assess and report on the Council's value for money approach.</p>	<p>Corporate Strategy Directorate Service Plans PDR Framework</p> <p>Programme Management Board</p> <p>The Green Book – Performance Management Information</p> <p>Fit for the Future Programme</p> <p>Audit function</p>
Ensuring capacity exists to generate the information required to review service quality regularly	<p>Senior managers are provided with financial and performance data in a timely manner.</p> <p>The CLT regularly considers the adequacy of resources and redirects as required</p> <p>It is recognised that it may be necessary to allocate resource in some areas to enable review of service provision and transformation during 2022/2023.</p>	<p>Fit for the Future Programme</p>
Preparing budgets in accordance with objectives strategies and the medium term financial plan	<p>The Council's budget calculations are robust. The Council has an integrated approach to service and financial planning and budgeting processes are therefore closely aligned in the Business planning process. Directorate</p>	<p>MTFS</p>

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements

What we have in place

Evidence

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.

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 MTFS is regularly updated to reflect changes in the financial outlook as well as government announcements and external factors. Financing costs are based on the approved Investment Programme and any approved changes.

MTFS

The MTFS reflects future risks and establishes the process for setting a sustainable financial strategy.. A cautious view is taken on government funding and the risks to income and expenditure.

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.

Ensuring the medium term financial strategy integrates and balances service priorities, affordability and other resource constraints

The Council has an integrated approach to service and financial planning. The MTFS aligns with the Council's Directorate 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 financial

MTFS
 Directorate Plans

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
	challenge. Resource constraints are recognized and form the basis for the Council's Fit for the Future transformation and efficiency programme.	
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.	Corporate Strategy Directorate Service Plans MTFS
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 when appropriate. 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.	MTFS Fit for the Future Programme
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.	Directorate Service Plans

Developing the entity's capacity, including the capacity of its leadership and the individuals within it

Summary:

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

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
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 online. 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.	The Green Book – Performance Management Information
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 professional level and provide advice and support 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.	HR – Benchmarking Partnership Landscape
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.	Fit for thr Future Programme Directorate Service Plans and delivery

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
		Contract and Performance Monitoring
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. Officers and Members are expected to have a clear sense of their purpose, roles, and responsibilities in line with the Council's strategy and suite of policies and processes which support it.	The Constitution HR – PDR Process
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 a clear statement of the respective roles and responsibilities of the Committees, individual Members and the Council's senior officers. Long term plans/objectives set out the Council's Corporate Strategy and direction. Members and officers have good working relationships and regular communications.	The Constitution Corporate Strategy
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.	The Constitution: Part 3 – Responsibility for Functions, Management and Arrangements and Scheme of Delegations
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 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 officers have prepared schemes of sub	Corporate Strategy and policy documents The Constitution which includes:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part 2 – articles of the Constitution • Part 3 – Responsibility for functions, Management Arrangements and Scheme of Delegations • Part 5 – Codes and Protocols

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements

What we have in place

Evidence

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.

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. There is also a regular meeting with between the Chief Executive and and Leader meeting with all Group Leaders and deputies.

CLT meet the Executive on a regular basis to discuss formal Executive business and future plans.

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:

- 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

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.

The Council ensures that Members have access to training required to fulfil their role as Members including, a comprehensive induction programme, in depth financial training and mandatory training on salient topics. 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.

Member Induction and Development Programme

HR Polices – PDR Process

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
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. A range of vocational and non-vocational training is available to officers to develop skills on a continuing basis to improve performance, including the ability to scrutinise and challenge and to recognise when outside expert advice is needed.</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> <p>The Council ensures that the statutory officers have the skills, resources, expertise and systems necessary to perform effectively in their roles and that these roles are properly understand throughout the Council.</p>	
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.</p> <p>Members of the public can ask questions of Executive Members at the Executive meetings. The Constitution sets out the processes for consideration of petitions depending on the number of signatures.</p>	Corporate Strategy The Constitution
Taking steps to consider the leadership's own effectiveness and ensuring leaders are open to constructive feedback from peer review and inspections	The Council has taken part in LGA Peer Reviews and taken steps to implement recommendations.	LGA Peer Review and subsequent reporting

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
Holding staff to account through regular performance reviews which take account of training or development needs	There is a formal annual Performance Development Review process to assess the officer's performance, progress and address any training gaps to enable roles to be carried out more effectively.	HR Polices – PDR process
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	The Council's HR team ensures that Health and Wellbeing of the workforce is maintained. The Council ensures that sickness levels are monitored by managers and HR and reported in the Green Book.	HR Function

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

Summary:

Local government needs to ensure that the organisations and governance structures that it oversees have implemented, and can sustain, an effective performance management system that facilitates effective and efficient delivery of planned services. Risk management and internal control are important and integral parts of a performance management system and crucial to the achievement of outcomes. Risk should be considered and addressed as part of all decision making activities. A strong system of financial management is essential for the implementation of policies and the achievement of intended outcomes, as it will enforce financial discipline, strategic allocation of resources, efficient service delivery, and accountability. It is also essential that a culture and structure for scrutiny is in place as a key part of decision making, policy making and review. A positive working culture that accepts, promotes and encourages constructive challenge is critical to successful scrutiny and successful delivery.

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
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The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
<p>Recognising that risk management is an integral part of all activities and must be considered in all aspects of decision making</p>	<p>The Council has adopted a risk management strategy.</p> <p>Risk is covered in all committee reports and embedded in Service Planning.</p>	<p>Risk Management Strategy Corporate and Directorate Risk Registers</p>
<p>Implementing robust and integrated risk management arrangements and ensuring that they are working effectively</p>	<p>The Council has ensured that risk management is embedded into the culture and processes of the Council.</p> <p>The Council ensures that 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. The Council's Strategic risk register is monitored by CLT.</p> <p>Business continuity, particularly for ICT, has been developed.</p> <p>The Council ensures that it has insurance to insure risks. Excesses have been set based on analysis and advice of the broker.</p> <p>Other risks are identified in the budget and a risk contingency provided.</p> <p>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>Risk Management Strategy Strategic and Directorate Risk Registers</p> <p>Programme Management Board and reporting</p> <p>The Green Book – Performance Management Reporting</p>

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
	<p>Major Project dashboards (eg. Victoria Square and Sheerwater projects) report on risks.</p> <p>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.</p>	
Ensuring that responsibilities for managing individual risks are clearly allocated	<p>Risk management is embedded into the processes of the organisation. All risk registers allocate risk to individual managers as risk owners.</p> <p>All committee reports require the risks associated with the matter of the report to be included in the report.</p> <p>The Executive is the committee responsible for risk management and business continuity with overview by the Standards and Audit Committee</p>	<p>Risk Management Strategy Strategic and Directorate Risk Registers</p> <p>Programme Management Board and reporting</p> <p>The Green Book – Performance Management Reporting</p> <p>Business Continguity Polices</p> <p>Agenda Reports</p>
Monitoring service delivery effectively including planning, specification, execution and independent post implementation review	<p>The Council ensures that 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.</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>	<p>The Green Book – Performance Management Reporting</p>

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
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 Council's 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.	Council and Committees of the Council Agendas and Reports The Constitution – Scheme of Delegation
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 sponsored by a Member of CLT and has a dedicated resource.</p> <p>There are project specific oversight groups for the most significant developments.</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>	Overview and Scrutiny Committee CLT Sponsor and dedicated resource
Providing members and senior management with regular reports on service delivery plans and on progress towards outcome achievement	<p>The Council has a performance management framework in place. The 'Green Book' performance and monitoring report is produced and published online each month. It is considered at each Executive meeting.</p> <p>The Council ensures project reporting is prepared for management and Members quarterly.</p> <p>The Council is monitoring achievements against the priorities and actions set as part of its Corporate Strategy.</p>	The Green Book – Performance Management Reporting Corporate Strategy and monitoring of achievements

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
Ensuring there is consistency between specification stages (such as budgets) and post implementation reporting (eg. Financial statements)	The Council ensures that there are effective internal control arrangements in place for sound financial management systems and processes. 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.	Financial Reporting Project Monitoring Programme Management Board
Aligning the risk management strategy and policies on internal control with achieving objectives	The Council's internal audit plan is a risk based plan taking into account risks identified through the 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.	Internal Audit Function Corporate and Directorate Risk Registers
Evaluating and monitoring risk management and internal control on a regular basis	<p>The Council ensures that risk management and internal control processes are regularly considered by Internal Audit as part of the annual programme of work.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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</p>	Internal Audit Function Corporate and Directorate Risk Registers

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements

What we have in place

Evidence

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.

The Constitution
Anti Fraud Policy
Gifts and Hospitality

Register of Members Interests

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 iPad.

Internal Audit Function

Ensuring an audit committee which is independent of the executive and accountable to the governing body:

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

Standards and Audit Committee
Independent Member (Chair)

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a further source of effective assurance regarding arrangements for managing risk and maintaining an effective control environment <p>That its recommendations are listened to and acted upon</p>	<p>assurances from Internal Audit and External Audit.</p>	
<p>Ensuring effective arrangements are in place for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data, including processes to safeguard personal data</p>	<p>The Council has appointed The Director of Democratic and Legal Services to undertake the role of Data Protection Officer at the Council and ensure compliance with regulations. The Council has data protection and security policies to ensure the proper collection, use, storage and control of its assets including data and information.</p>	<p>Data Protection Policies IT Security and Acceptable Use Policy</p>
<p>Ensuring effective arrangements are in place and operating effectively when sharing data with other bodies</p>	<p>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 3rd parties which incorporate appropriate safeguards to protect data.</p>	<p>Data Protection Policies MAISP Data Sharing Agreements CCTV Control Room</p>
<p>Reviewing and regularly auditing the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring</p>	<p>Performance data is reported regularly to senior management and Members and published publicly. Any issues arising or anomalies are investigated.</p>	
<p>Ensuring financial management supports both long term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance</p>	<p>The Council's Finance team monitors and reports on in-year performance and long term risks/financial pressures and trends.</p> <p>The Treasury management system tracks long term investments, and borrowing.</p> <p>Annual budget setting reports also refer to the MTFS, considering the long term implications of the budget to be approved.</p>	<p>MTFS Treasury Management</p>
<p>Ensuring well-developed financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control including management of financial risks and controls</p>	<p>The Council enables the Chief Finance Officer to bring influence to bear on all material decisions and provide advice on the levels of reserves and balances to be retained.</p>	<p>MTFS</p>

The Council ensures that Services are supported by dedicated contacts in the finance team. They have access to finance system providing accessibility to financial information and integrated, electronic processes which produce finance monitoring reports.

The Council ensures that financial regulations and other operational instructions are reviewed to ensure they remain up to date with regard to structures, limits and operating practices.

An update on audit reports, and the recommendations, is reported to the Standards and Audit Committee at each meeting and summary reports are available to all members.

The Council's 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.

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

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
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	The Council ensures that reports are written using plain language, in a standard format which assists with reviewing and ensures key information is covered.	Council Reports Council website

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
	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.	
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 Council ensures that it complies with the local government transparency code and publishes all required information in a timely manner. Committee documents and webcasts are available online. Reports include an Executive Summary and sections on key implications. Detailed supporting information is included in Appendices.	Council Reports Council Website
Reporting at least annually on performance, value for money and stewardship of resources to stakeholders in a timely and understandable way	The Council has established a MTFS planning process in order to deliver a financial strategy ensuring sustainable finances, a robust annual budget process ensuring financial balance and an adequate monitoring process. The Council publishes the Green Book which reports performance issues and variances by exception providing a focused and understandable document.	MTFS Fit for the Future Programme The Green Book
Ensuring members and senior management own the results reported	CLT members and all portfolio holders are accountable for performance and financial monitoring/outturn.	Agendas and Reports HR – PDR process
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 Internal Audit and across the Council. The draft statement is reviewed by the Standards and Audit Committee.	Annual Governance Statement Code of Corporate Governance

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements	What we have in place	Evidence
	<p>The draft Annual Governance Statement is published in draft in the Statement of Accounts. The final version is published with final accounts.</p> <p>Improvement Plan is updated, and new actions added if appropriate, as a result of each review.</p>	
Ensuring that this Framework is applied to jointly managed or shared service organisations as appropriate	Where the Council is party to joint arrangements it ensures that appropriate governance arrangements are put in place.	Code of Corporate Governance
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.	Statutory Accounts
Ensuring that recommendations for corrective action made by external audit are acted upon	The Council shall ensure that corrective action from internal and external audit reports is undertaken. Any actions are monitored by CLT, and the Standards and Audit committee receive reports from External and Internal Audit with status of any outstanding recommendations.	Standards and Audit Committee Internal audit plan and the monitoring of audit recommendations
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	The Council ensures that the audit function is resourced and maintained through the appointment of Mazars. Internal Audit reports directly 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 iPad. The implementation of audit recommendations is monitored, and	Standards and Audit Committee Internal audit plan and the monitoring of audit recommendations

The Council should demonstrate the following requirements

What we have in place

Evidence

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.

Ensuring that when working in partnership arrangements for accountability are clear and the need for wider public accountability has been recognized and met

The Joint Committee, which incorporates the 'statutory' Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership (Safer Working Partnership), has agreed Terms of Reference and governance arrangements, that set out collective roles and responsibilities for participating organisations, including the Council.
Services which are outsourced and operated by contractors are monitored.

The Constitution

Woking Borough Council

Local Code of Corporate Governance



Introduction

Woking Borough Council recognises the need to ensure that its affairs are managed in a way which achieves the highest standards of corporate governance.

This Code sets out for members and officers the main principles of good governance for Woking Borough Council.

What is Corporate Governance?

Governance comprises the arrangements put in place to ensure the intended outcomes for stakeholders are defined and achieved.

Good governance is how the Council ensures that it is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. It comprises the systems, processes, cultures and values by which the Council is directed and controlled. Through effective governance the Council is accountable to, engages with and, where applicable, leads the community.

What is the Purpose of the Code?

This Code is intended to support political and officer leadership with developing and maintaining robust governance across the whole governance system.

The Code is the framework within which the Council is accountable to its users, stakeholders and the wider community. It sets out and describes the way in which the Council carries out its functions through its members and officers, and the procedures and processes through which it undertakes its work, and through which it aims to establish and maintain public confidence.

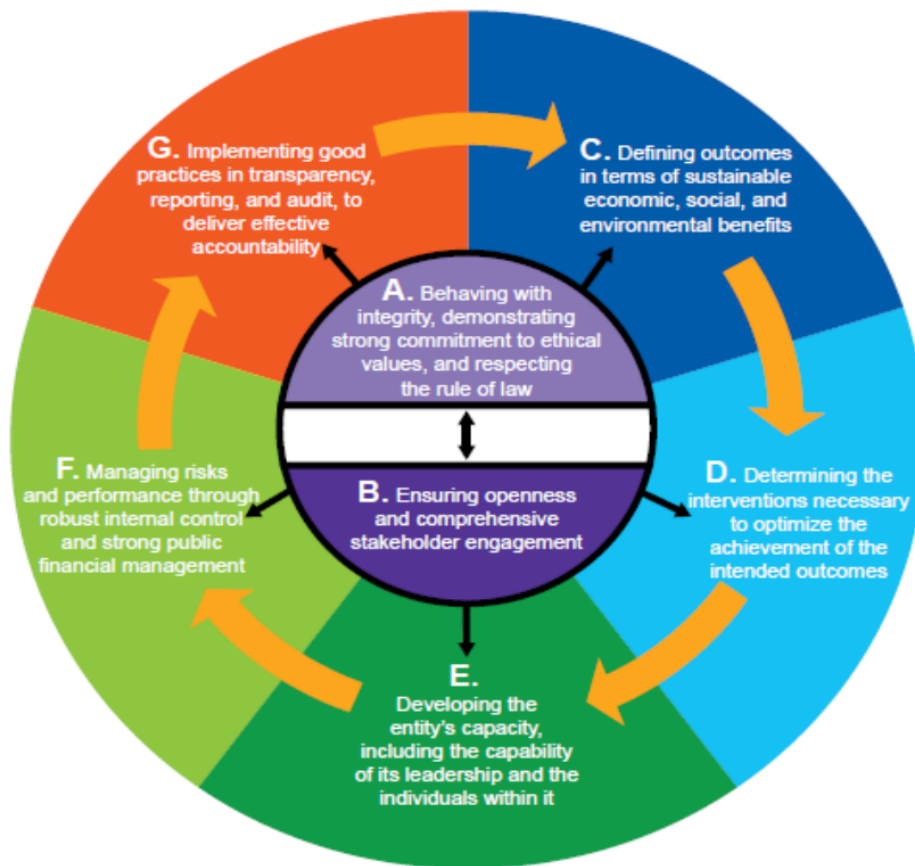
What is the Code based upon?

It is based on existing good practice within the Council and is consistent with the CIPFA framework for Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (CIPFA/Solace, 2016)

The Council is committed to the principles of good governance, and has adopted the seven core principles of the CIPFA and SOLACE framework as follows:

- Behaving with Integrity
- Ensuring Openness
- Defining Outcomes
- Determining effective interventions
- Developing Capacity
- Managing Risks and Performance
- implementing good practices
- Transparent and Effective Accountability

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



Full details of the seven principles with the respective sub-principles, together with the actions and behaviours that can demonstrate compliance is provided in the Council's Annual Governance Statement and accompanying detailed analysis.

How does Woking ensure good governance?

The Council's approach to governance takes account of the environment in which it operates. The Council's aim is to ensure resources are directed in accordance with agreed policy and priorities; there is sound and inclusive decision making; and there is clear accountability for the use of those resources in order to achieve desired outcomes for service users and communities.

All Members have an important role to play in representing their constituents, as well as acting together as the Council. Officers serve the Council as a corporate body rather than any political group, combination of groups, or individual member. Members and Officers should work in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. Members determine the Council's policies and Officers are responsible for implementing decisions taken by the Council, Leader, Executive and / or the appropriate committee as well as taking decisions delegated to them under the Scheme of Delegation. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviews and scrutinises the Council's performance.

In discharging these duties all parties should act in an open, honest and transparent manner.

The Council seeks to ensure the highest standards are met, and governance arrangements are not only sound but are seen to be sound.

Who is accountable for corporate governance?

All members and officers are expected to commit to the Council's principles of good governance; however, there are specific responsibilities for the following individuals and groups:

The Corporate Leadership Team has a collective responsibility for good governance, but this is underpinned by the role of the three statutory officers of the Council:

- Head of Paid Service – Chief Executive
- Monitoring Officer – Director of Legal and Democratic Services
- Section 151 Officer – Finance Director

Chief officers are responsible for the policies and procedures which form part of this Code and that fall within their functional responsibilities. Each chief officer is supported by senior managers who are responsible for ensuring that the relevant policies and procedures are up to date, are being complied with and are effective in achieving good governance.

Most of the arrangements are set out in the Council's constitution and supporting policies and documentation. However, the Council recognises that these arrangements must be kept up-to-date and need to be kept under review to ensure that they remain appropriate and are improved where possible. Without proper monitoring, the effectiveness of the Council's arrangements could be compromised so the Council will ensure that systems are in place to monitor compliance with the agreed processes and procedures including the Annual Governance Statement.

Who has responsibility for maintaining the Code?

To ensure the Code is effectively maintained, we will:

- Update the Code with developments in best practice and leading guidance
- Undertake an annual review of Corporate Governance that incorporates the Annual Governance Statement

The Standards and Audit Committee will have responsibility for providing assurance to Council in respect of:

- The effectiveness of the Council's Corporate Governance arrangements
- The approval of the Annual Governance Statement
- The effectiveness of the Council's financial and non-financial performance

STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE – 5 OCTOBER 2022

INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

Executive Summary

The Woking Borough Council Financial Regulation 2.8 requires that the Chief Finance Officer (Finance Director) shall regularly report to the Standards and Audit Committee (Committee) on the work undertaken by Internal Audit. Similarly, under the Internal Audit Charter approved by the Committee, it is a requirement that Internal Audit provides a quarterly report on internal audit progress and key findings to the Committee.

This report covers audit activity and performance from 7 July to 22 September 2022.

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to:

RESOLVE That the report be received and progress against the 2022-23 Internal Audit Plan and implementation of Internal Audit recommendations be noted.

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

Background Papers: None.

Reporting Person: Graeme Clarke, Partner, Mazars LLP
E-Mail: graeme.clarke@mazars.co.uk

Juan Fosco, Manager, Mazars LLP
E-Mail: juan.fosco@mazars.co.uk

Contact Person: Leigh Clarke, Finance Director
Ext. 3277, E-Mail: leigh.clarke@woking.gov.uk

Date Published: 27 September 2022

Implications

Financial and Risk

There may be minimal financial implications regarding implementing internal audit recommendations depending on the nature of the area and recommendations made. However, any such implications are considered by Management as part of the consideration of the recommendations raised. Some audit recommendations are also designed to improve value for money and financial control.

Internal Audit identifies weaknesses in the control environment. Therefore, implementing recommendations improves the control environment and hence the risk management.

Human Resources and Equalities

Some audit recommendations need officer resources to put in place. There is minimal impact on equality issues.

Legal

The professional responsibilities of internal auditors are set out within UK Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).



Woking Borough Council - Internal Audit Progress Report
For the July to September 2022 Period
September 2022

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Disclaimer

This report (“Report”) was prepared by Mazars LLP at the request of Woking Borough Council (Council), and terms for the preparation and scope of the Report have been agreed with them. The matters raised in this Report are only those which came to our attention during our internal audit work. Whilst every care has been taken to ensure that the information provided in this Report is as accurate as possible, Internal Audit have only been able to base findings on the information and documentation provided and consequently, no complete guarantee can be given that this Report is necessarily a comprehensive statement of all the weaknesses that exist, or of all the improvements that may be required.

The Report was prepared solely for the use and benefit of the Council, and to the fullest extent permitted by law, Mazars LLP accepts no responsibility and disclaims all liability to any third party who purports to use or rely for any reason whatsoever on the Report, its contents, conclusions, any extract, reinterpretation, amendment and/or modification. Accordingly, any reliance placed on the Report, its contents, conclusions, any extract, reinterpretation, amendment and/or modification by any third party is entirely at their own risk.

01 Introduction

The Woking Borough Council (Council) Financial Regulation 2.8 requires that the Chief Finance Officer (Finance Director) shall regularly report to the Standards and Audit Committee (Committee) on the work undertaken by Internal Audit. Similarly, the Internal Audit Charter approved by the Committee requires that Internal Audit provide a quarterly report on internal audit progress and key findings to the Committee.

The Committee approved the 2022/23 Internal Audit Plan (Plan) on 3 March 2022. The purpose of this report is to outline the following in respect of Internal Audit Activity during the period:

- An update on progress in delivering the 2022/23 internal audit plan;
- A summary of any Limited/Unsatisfactory Assurance reports issued and high priority recommendations raised; and
- An update on follow-up activity and any recommendations outstanding for implementation.

This report covers internal audit activity and performance from 7 July 2022 to 22 September 2022.

02 Internal Audit Progress

The approved Internal Audit Plan for 2022/23 was for 305 days, including 30 days for IT audits and 24 days for the Head of Internal Audit role. The audits in the Plan comprised a mixture of key financial systems, service-specific (operational and financial), corporate-wide, and IT reviews.

Of the 18 internal audits included in the 2022/23 Plan, one was scheduled in Q1, two in Q2, seven in Q3 and seven in Q4.

The remaining audit related to Business Planning was initially resourced to start in Q1. However, following discussions with the Head of Transformation and Digital and the Director of Finance, we agreed to split the scope of this work into two separate reviews. One related to reviewing the accuracy of

data feeding into the Green Book, and the remaining area to focus on Business Planning, including priority setting; collation of information and development of plans; and risk management. In terms of timing, it was agreed that this work will be deferred to the 2023/24 Plan due to relevant Officers having minimal bandwidth to undertake a review of this type given competing priorities and also, a Member-led 'Green Book' review taking place reviewing the metrics in terms of structure, timing, and indicators. Given that the indicators may change, a review into current indicators was not considered the best use of time and resources.

Status of the remaining audits in the Plan is therefore as follows:

Audit Status	Number of reviews	Percentage %
Finalised	1	6%
Draft	0	0%
Fieldwork in progress	1	6%
Not yet started	15	88%
Total	17	100%

Further detail on the audits, progress and timing is included in **Appendix A1** of this report.

03 Audit Reports Issued

We have four categories by which we classify internal audit assurance over the processes we examine: Substantial, Moderate, Limited or Unsatisfactory reviews.

One final report was issued during the period on an assurance basis and received a Moderate Assurance opinion.

In our Annual Report for 2021/22, we also highlighted three reports at the draft stage. One of these related to Temporary Accommodation has been finalised. However, the Capital Programme and Cyber Security reports remain in draft. The services have asked for additional time to respond to the queries raised by Internal Audit, given workload pressures and delays

due to the summer break. The table below shows the outstanding reports and also those issued in the period:

Audit Title	Assurance Opinion	Recommendations by Priority		
		High	Medium	Low
2021/2022 Internal Audit Plan				
Temporary Accommodation	Moderate	-	6	-
Cyber Security*	Limited	-	8	1
Capital Programme*	Moderate	-	3	-
2022/2023 Internal Audit Plan				
Corporate Debt Management	Moderate	-	2	-
Total		0	23	2

*Draft reports currently awaiting management responses, which may lead to changes in content, including assurance levels and/or recommendations.

There is also one report from the 2020/21 Plan outstanding as draft (Covid-19 Lessons Learned). Internal Audit has raised this matter with the Finance Director at our regular meetings and the status of these reports has also been reported to the Committee. We are working with relevant Officers and the Finance Director to complete this.

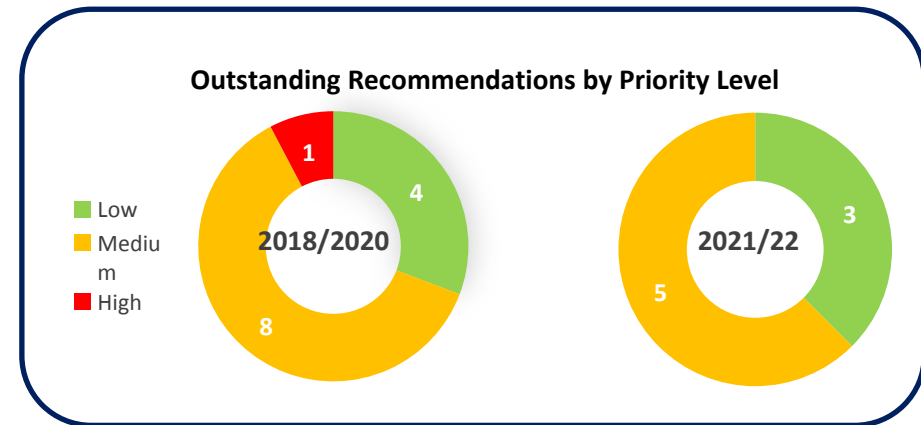
Internal Audit categorises recommendations as High, Medium, or Low priority to differentiate between the recommendations made. These categories give management an indication of the importance and urgency of implementing the recommendations.

As shown in the table above, no High Priority recommendations were raised. Further details of recommendations can be found in the summary reports for each audit provided separately to Members.

04 Follow-Ups

Since the last Committee meeting, the Council's Action Management system has been populated with new recommendations from finalised reports.

As of 18 August 2022, there are 21 recommendations in Action Management which have past their initially agreed implementation dates. There are a further nine recommendations that were raised but within the agreed timescales for implementation and therefore not reviewed. Priorities for overdue recommendations are as follows:



The high-priority recommendation outstanding is related to the Empty Homes 2020-21 audit and had a July 2022 deadline.

We shared a report listing all recommendations raised to the Council's CLT on 30 August 2022, ahead of the previously planned Committee Meeting. Relevant Officers assigned to implement all outstanding recommendations were reminded to update the Action Management System with progress on implementing these. A procedure is in place to escalate recommendations that have not been implemented as agreed to CLT and finally to this Committee where necessary.

Further detail of outstanding high-priority recommendations is included in **Appendix A2** of this report.

05 Other Matters

This section is used to set out other matters which may be of interest to the Committee and in **Appendix A4** we have provided details on a recent report produced by Mazars on Cyber Security.

This report takes as its starting point the inevitability of being cyber attacked. Cyber security is no longer a question of if, but when. That may amount to a mindset shift for many business leaders, but we believe it's an important one to make.

A1 Current Progress – 2022/23 Plan

Audit area	Progress	Assurance Opinion	Recommendations		
			High	Medium	Low
Corporate Debt Recovery	Final	Moderate	-	3	-
Corporate Governance Arrangements	Fieldwork Complete	-	-	-	-
Disabled Facilities Grant	Starts 26/09/2022	-	-	-	-
Health & Safety	Starts 19/10/2022	-	-	-	-
HR – Recruitment and Retention	Starts 02/11/2022	-	-	-	-
Housing Stock – H&S Compliance	Starts 21/11/2022	-	-	-	-
Key Financial Systems – AP, GL, NNDR and Council Tax	Starts 05/12/2022	-	-	-	-
Community Safety	Starts 09/01/2023	-	-	-	-
Contract Management – Savills	Starts 19/01/2023	-	-	-	-
Commercial and Investment Property Portfolio	Starts 06/02/2023	-	-	-	-
Waste Management	Starts 06/02/2023	-	-	-	-
Victoria Square	Starts 22/02/2023	-	-	-	-
Thameswey Group Companies	Starts in Q3	-	-	-	-
Business Planning	Deferred to 23-24	-	-	-	-
IT					
IT Disaster Recovery	Starts 07/11/2022	-	-	-	-
Office 365	Starts in Q3	-	-	-	-
Total			0	3	0

A2 Outstanding High Priority Recommendations (Past Implementation Date)

Empty Homes 2020/21					
Ref	Observation/Risk	Recommendation	Priority	Management Response	Timescale and Responsibility
1	<p>Discussions with the Private Sector Housing Manager confirmed that the governance arrangements (Empty Homes Plan, Enforcement Policy, and Inspection Procedures) and processes have previously been in place. The necessary information is available and procedural guidance; however, this information is outdated for over two years. For example, procedural guidance for Empty Homes does not relate to the current private rented sector access scheme. The EXTralet scheme is no longer in place at the Council.</p> <p>Where multiple strategies and procedures are not updated, there is a risk that the Empty Homes process is not actively re-evaluated.</p> <p>There is a risk that if the plan is not updated, the Council may not achieve the Housing team objectives. Furthermore, without an updated Enforcement Policy the Council is at risk of reputational damage and or inappropriate action.</p>	<p>The Empty Homes Plan, the Enforcement Policy and the House Inspection Guidance should be reviewed and updated to reflect the current borough landscape. The Plan should be reviewed by Senior Management and regularly reviewed.</p> <p>Furthermore, the flowchart of referrals should be reviewed by the Private Sector Housing Team and regularly reviewed.</p>	High	<p>The Empty Homes Plan and procedures will be reviewed. The Housing Standards Enforcement Policy emphasis is on improving private rented dwellings and not Empty Homes. Any review of the Housing Standards Enforcement Policy will have regard to the Empty Homes Plan and vice versa.</p> <p>September 2022:</p> <p>The Empty Homes Plan has been drafted and is currently subject to public consultation. It is on the forward plan to be considered by the Executive in November.</p>	<p>Revised timescale 31/12/2022</p> <p>Private Sector Housing Manager</p>

Empty Homes 2020/21

Ref	Observation/Risk	Recommendation	Priority	Management Response	Timescale and Responsibility
	With no up to date procedural guidance, there is a risk that of inconsistent practises among the staff.				

A3 Definitions of Assurance

Definitions of Assurance Levels	
Level	Description
Substantial	The framework of governance, risk management and control is adequate and effective.
Moderate	Some improvements are required to enhance the adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control.
Limited	There are significant weaknesses in the framework of governance, risk management and control such that it could be or could become inadequate and ineffective.
Unsatisfactory	There are fundamental weaknesses in the framework of governance, risk management and control such that it is inadequate and ineffective or is likely to fail.

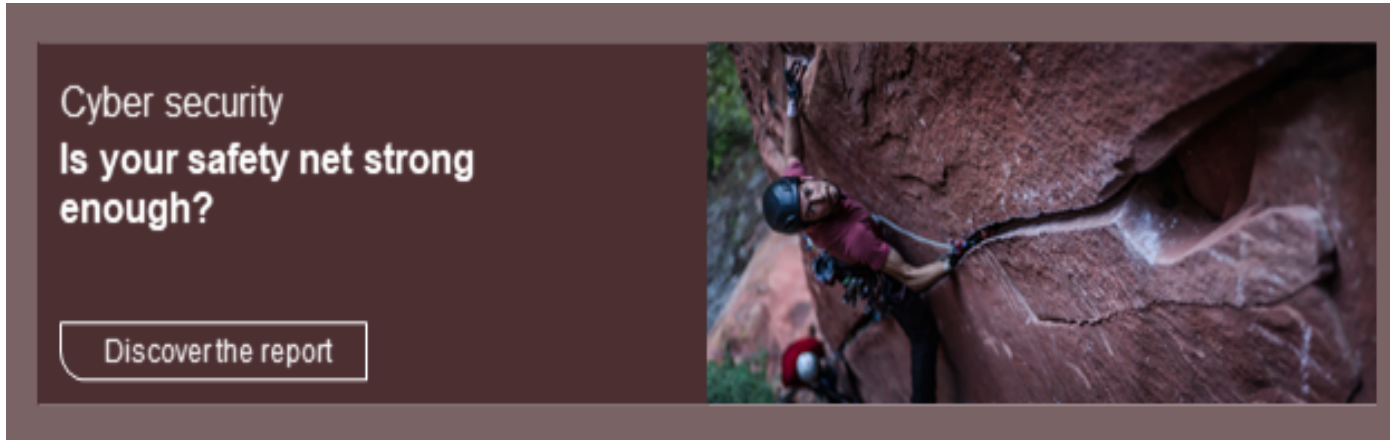
Definitions of Recommendations		
Priority	Definition	Action required
High (Fundamental)	Significant weakness in governance, risk management and control that, if unresolved, exposes the organisation to an unacceptable level of residual risk.	Remedial action must be taken urgently and within an agreed timescale.
Medium (Significant)	Weakness in governance, risk management and control that, if unresolved, exposes the organisation to a high level of residual risk.	Remedial action should be taken at the earliest opportunity and within an agreed timescale.
Low (Housekeeping)	Scope for improvement in governance, risk management and control.	Remedial action should be prioritised and undertaken within an agreed timescale.

A4 Cyber Security: Is your safety net strong enough?

Mazars conducted a survey of more than 1,000 executives worldwide last December for our annual C-suite barometer emphasised how cyber security is now a major preoccupation among corporate leaders.

More than half of the respondents told us that cyber risks have increased in the past year, and more than one-third are bracing for data breaches in the next 12 months. Yet the same survey showed that top management has a level of confidence in their own company's ability to withstand attacks that may seem surprising, perhaps even paradoxical.

Do they know something their own IT departments don't? Probably not. Yet these findings suggest that cyber security has now become a delicate balancing act for many businesses, akin to a tightrope walk: yes, it's perilous, but the important thing is to build a strong safety net that can cushion any eventual fall.



Cyber security
Is your safety net strong enough?

Discover the report

Contacts

Graeme Clarke

Partner, Mazars

graeme.clarke@mazars.co.uk

Juan Fosco

Manager, Mazars

juan.fosco@mazars.co.uk

Mazars is an internationally integrated partnership specialising in audit, accountancy, advisory, tax and legal services*. Operating in over 90 countries and territories worldwide, we draw on the expertise of 44,000 professionals – 28,000 in Mazars’ integrated partnership and 16,000 via the Mazars North America Alliance – to assist clients of all sizes at every stage in their development.

*where permitted under applicable country laws.

www.mazars.co.uk

STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE – 5 OCTOBER 2022

HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT

Executive Summary

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and subsequent legislation places a general duty on the Council to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees and others such as the general public who use the Council's facilities and may be affected by the carrying out of the work the Council does.

This report provides the Standards and Audit Committee with a review of health and safety activity during 2021/2022.

This report demonstrates that there are no matters of concern.

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to:

RESOLVE That the Health and Safety Annual Report be received with no matters of concern.

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

Background Papers: None.

Reporting Person: Joanne McIntosh, Director of Legal and Democratic Services
Email: joanne.mcintosh@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3038

Contact Person: Joanne McIntosh, Director of Legal and Democratic Services
Email: joanne.mcintosh@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3038

Date Published: 27 September 2022

REPORT ENDS

HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT – 2021/22

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This annual Health and Safety report to the Standards and Audit Committee outlines the Council's Health and Safety Activities for the 2021/22 financial year.

2.0 Health and Safety Activities 2021/22

2.1 The Senior Health and Safety Officer was seconded to Elmbridge BC with effect from March 2019 and during 2021/22, spent two days per week working at Elmbridge and three days a week at Woking. This secondment has now come to an end.

2.2 Health and Safety activities this year were reduced accordingly and no health and safety policies were updated or introduced during the year.

2.3 The bespoke induction video that was filmed in the Civic Offices was completed and has been shown at all inductions since June 2021. The induction video shows footage of someone walking the fire evacuation routes from the Civic Offices, which makes it easier for new starters to understand the evacuation procedure. The video is more in-depth than the previous off-the-shelf DVDs used for induction.

2.4 Another advantage of the induction video is that it enables anyone from HR to run an induction, not just the Health & Safety and Insurance team. The previous DVDs that were used for induction had to be supplemented by verbal information about fire evacuation, first aid, location of welfare facilities etc, but this information is now included in the induction video.

2.5 Evacuation procedures were not tested at the Civic Offices during the year. This is because it was felt that an evacuation followed by staff congregating at the fire assembly point could cause social distancing to be compromised so the Council's Covid19 Risk Assessment had a provision for discontinuing regular Fire Drills during the periods of lockdown.

2.6 Many of the Fire Wardens for the Civic Offices were either solely or partly working from home. In the absence of some of the permanent Fire Wardens, additional staff were given training so they could act as "stand in" Fire Wardens for the days of the week that they were working in the Civic Offices. The Council is in the process of altering the fire evacuation procedure.

2.7 Evacuation procedures at other buildings have been tested but not observed by the Senior Health & Safety Officer:

- Brockhill - 14 July 2021, evacuation of all persons in the communal areas and corridors as they have a stay put policy for flats.
- Moorcroft – full evacuation on 26 May 2021 when the fire alarm was activated by a fire in the kitchen and a drill on 21 February 2022.
- Parkview - 10 June 2021
- St Marys – 27 January 2022
- The Vyne – 2 June 2021.

2.8 A number of risk assessments for Covid 19 secure activities were undertaken or reviewed during the year.

2.9 Risk assessments have been reviewed and updated during this financial year and stored in the Risk Assessment library in SharePoint for the following teams and functions:

- Building Control;
- Christmas Tree in Jubilee Square;
- Civic Offices car park;
- Civic Offices first aid provision;
- Community Meals;
- Council-wide office work;
- Family Services (inc Family Support and Family Centres);
- Financial Services;
- Green Infrastructure;
- Green Infrastructure volunteering
- Health & Safety and Insurance;
- Homelink Handypersons
- Health & Wellbeing (including Homelink, Social Prescribing, Independent Support, Brockhill and Careline);
- Housing Needs (includes Options & Solutions);
- Housing Standards;
- Housing Asset Management
- ICT and ICT sites;
- Moorcroft;
- Parking CEOs;
- Parking Voucher Officer;
- Planning Policy;
- Property Services
- Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services;
- St Marys;
- The Vyne
- use of evacuation chairs in the Civic Offices
- use of lifts to evacuate the Civic Offices;
- Women's Support Centre

All relevant managers have been contacted to ensure that any further risk assessments are kept in the centralised Risk Assessment library on SharePoint.

2.10 All current Health and Safety documents are available on the Health and Safety pages on ewokplus.

3.0 Accidents and Near Misses

3.1 Detailed accident statistics for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 are attached in Appendix 1.

3.2 There were four accidents to employees, none of which resulted in any injuries or required to be reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in accordance with the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR). In the whole of the previous year there were two accidents to employees, neither of which were reported to the HSE.

3.3 There were three accidents to members of the public, one of which was reported to the HSE under RIDDOR as the injured person was taken directly to hospital for treatment.

3.4 One accident report form was received which related to a non-employee who was taken ill whilst on Council premises. This episode of ill health resulted in the non-employee being taken directly to hospital for treatment, but because the ill health did not arise out of the Council's work activities, it did not need to be reported to the HSE.

3.5 These accidents are detailed in Appendix 1. In the whole of the previous year there were six accidents to non-employees and none were reported to the HSE under RIDDOR.

3.6 One near miss report was received. The circumstances were that a person sounded the lift alarm and stated the lift had dropped and that she could see smoke coming out of the panel.

The lift was taken out of service and a lift engineer attended the same day but could not find evidence of anything burning or having burnt. The lift was tested, reset and put back into service.

Amey

- 3.7 There were six accidents to staff, none of which were RIDDOR reportable. There were no accidents to non-employees.

Brookwood Cemetery

- 3.8 There were five accidents to staff members, none of which were RIDDOR reportable. There was one accident to a non-employee and it was RIDDOR reportable.

Freedom Leisure

- 3.9 Accident statistics for Freedom Leisure are shown in Appendix 2. There were a total of seven accidents involving employees - two at the Leisure Centre, three at the Pool in the Park, one at the Sports Box and one at the new Eastwood Leisure Centre that opened in October 2021. No accidents to Freedom employees were required to be reported to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) under RIDDOR.
- 3.10 Members of the public sometimes go to the Pool in the Park and the Leisure Centre seeking first aid treatment for accidents which actually occurred in areas that are not responsibility of Freedom Leisure, such as Woking Park, the slope up to the Pool in the Park, the skate park, the children's play area and the car parks. These incidents are recorded as accidents and included in the accident statistics below.
- 3.11 At the Leisure Centre there were 186 accidents to non-employees, of which 110 are described as sport-related injuries and 10 occurred outside of Freedom Leisure's premises. No accidents to non-employees were required to be reported to the HSE under RIDDOR.
- 3.12 At the Pool in the Park, there were 78 accidents to non-employees, of which 11 are described as sport-related injuries and 9 occurred outside of Freedom Leisure's premises. No accidents to non-employees were required to be reported to the HSE under RIDDOR.
- 3.13 At the Sports Box, there were 24 accidents to non-employees of which 21 are described as sport-related injuries. No accidents to non-employees were required to be reported to the HSE under RIDDOR.
- 3.14 The new Eastwood Leisure Centre opened in October 2021 and there were 19 accidents to non-employees of which 18 are described as sport-related injuries. No accidents to non-employees were required to be reported to the HSE under RIDDOR.
- 3.15 To put these figures in context, in this period of time there were 249,160 visitors to the Leisure Centre, 195,856 visitors to the Pool, 96,783 visitors to the Sports Box and 68,028 visitors to the Eastwood Leisure Centre.
- 3.16 When comparing the number of accidents to those of 2020/21, it must be remembered that these premises were closed for part of the year due to lockdown so there much fewer visitors using the facilities. During 2020/21, there were 68,673 visitors to the Leisure Centre, 13,206 visitors to the Pool and 5,378 visitors to the SportsBox.

New Vision Homes

3.17 There were two employee accidents. There were nine accidents involving non-employees, four of which involved members of the public and five accidents involved contractors. None of these accidents were RIDDOR reportable.

Serco

3.18 There were eleven accidents to staff, one of which was RIDDOR reportable. There was one accident to a non-employee, which was not RIDDOR reportable.

Thameswey Group

3.19 There were no accidents to employees or non-employees.

Table 1 Summary Accident Statistics	Employee		Non-employee		RIDDOR Reportable	
	This year	Last year	This year	Last year	This year	Last year
Woking Borough Council	4	2	3	6	1	0
Amey	6	7	0	0	0	0
Brookwood Cemetery	5	5	1	0	1	0
Freedom Leisure - Leisure Centre	2	2	176	19	0	0
- Pool in the Park	3	0	69	1	0	0
- Sportsbox	1	0	24	3	0	0
- Eastwood LC from October 2021	1	N/a	19	N/a	0	N/a
Woking Park/Skate Park etc. (reported to Freedom Leisure)	0	0	19	1	0	0
New Vision Homes	2	0	9	4	0	0
SERCO	11	15	1	0	1	2
Thameswey Group	0	1	0	0	0	0

4.0 Aggressive Incidents

4.1 There were six aggressive incident reports received, relating to five separate incidents. In the whole of last year, two aggressive incident reports were completed relating to two separate incidents.

4.2 Two of the incidents took place in Council premises, one in Guildford Magistrates Court, one on the road plus one incident on the phone.

4.3 Two of the incidents involved a physical assault, one of which was reported to the Police. One incident involved a theft from Council premises and was reported to the Police.

- 4.4 One person was sent a letter advising that their behaviour was not acceptable and that a marker had been placed against their records to warn other staff who might have cause to deal with the person concerned.
- 4.5 No warnings were received from outside organisations about people who had been aggressive.

5.0 Health & Safety Training

5.1 All Council staff plus staff from other organisations that are based in the Civic Offices or who visit regularly and require a photo ID card receive a Health and Safety induction before a photo ID card is issued. Once a photo ID card is issued, the holder can move around the Civic Offices without needed to be escorted by a member of Council staff.

5.2 Inductions are held at the Civic Offices every Monday morning (although inductions for Street Angels are usually held outside office hours) and take approximately 45 minutes. As detailed in section 2.4, a bespoke induction video was introduced in June 2021.

5.3 Training undertaken this financial year includes:

- Induction training for all WBC staff on their first day - 72 staff and work experience students.
- Induction training for all staff from other organisations who are based in the Civic Offices including:
 - DWP – three people
 - New Vision Homes – three people
 - Skanska and their contractors - five people
 - Surrey County Council - 26 people
 - Surrey Police civilian counter staff – seven people
 - Others - 18 people
- First Aid training courses including:
 - Emergency First Aid at Work course (1 day) – 47 people
 - First Aid at Work (3-day initial training or 2-day requalification) – 21 people
 - Paediatric First Aid – 8 people

5.4 Staff are required to undertake health and safety eLearning which is provided by a training portal called WorkRite. All staff are required to undertake the following courses:

- Fire Awareness
- Manual Handling Awareness
- Mental Health Awareness
- Personal Travel Safety
- Slips, Trips & Falls

The vast majority of staff use a computer and work in an office to some degree, therefore most staff will also be required to undertake:

- Display Screen Equipment For Agile Workers
- Office Health & Safety

There are courses undertaken by staff where appropriate to their role, including:

- Asbestos Awareness
- Conflict Resolution
- COSHH

- Driver Awareness (*mandatory for all staff with a leased car, car allowance or who drive for work purposes*)
- First Aid (*mandatory for all staff with a first aid qualification*)
- Food Safety 1 (*mandatory for all Community Meals Service staff*)
- Food Safety 2 (*mandatory for all Community Meals Service staff*)
- Legionella Essentials
- New & Expectant Mothers (*to be taken by the New & Expectant Mother AND her line manager*)
- Risk Assessment (*mandatory for all managers*)
- Working At Height

5.5 Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent change to more flexible working patterns, many staff were allocated the Homeworkers online training course. This course has now been incorporated into the new Display Screen Equipment For Agile Workers course.

5.6 **A summary of the number of eLearning courses completed is attached as Appendix 3.** Where the number of staff is referred to, that relates to current staff as at the time of writing and does not include those who left before this report was written. This is because when staff leave, their log in to the WorkRite training portal is deactivated and deactivated accounts are not included in the reports that can be run on courses completed. Therefore, the actual number of staff who completed an eLearning course during 2021/22 might be higher than the number listed in the summary.

5.7 Three reminders are sent automatically to all those with an outstanding online course.

5.8 These e-learning courses help us to ensure that staff receive refresher health and safety training. It would be greatly welcomed if CLT would support this by making it clear that this training is mandatory and advising Senior Managers that their staff are required to complete the training when it is scheduled.

6.0 Planned Work for 2022/23

6.1 The Health and Safety work in 2022/23 will include the following:

- Reviewing and updating all safety policies.
 - The first to be reviewed will be the overarching Health and Safety Policy, followed by the Fire Safety Policy and then the other policies will be reviewed in the order of the oldest policy first.
- Purchasing a sub-titled version of the health and safety induction, so that it is available for any new starters with hearing impairments
- continuing to add, update and improve health and safety information available on ewokplus;

7.0 Implications

Financial and Risk

7.1 Costs associated with training and maintaining a safe working environment are provided for within existing funds.

Equalities and Human Resource

- 7.2 Training is crucial to maintaining a good health and safety record and avoiding accidents. As well as the training matters referred to in this report there remains a significant commitment to continuing this in the future and health and safety, particularly maintaining awareness, is a key part of the Corporate Learning and Development Plan.

Legal

- 7.3 The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and subsequent legislation places a general duty on the Council to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees and others such as the general public who use the Council's facilities and may be affected by the carrying out of the work the Council does.

8.0 Corporate Plan

- 8.1 The report meets the Corporate Plan objectives of strengthening partnerships and effective use of resources.

9.0 Engagement and Consultation

- 9.1 The Senior Health and Safety Officer engages with Amey, Brookwood Cemetery, Freedom Leisure, New Vision Homes, Serco and Thamesway in compiling the annual report.

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 - 2021/22 accident statistics WBC
- Appendix 2 - 2021/22 accident stats for Freedom Leisure
- Appendix 3 - summary of eLearning courses

ACCIDENT ANALYSIS SUMMARY TABLE

Number of accidents to **EMPLOYEES** in the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022

LOCATION	Brockhill	Car Parks	Civic Offices	Centres	Centre grounds/ car park	Comm Meals Kitchens	H G Wells	Paths & roads	Sheltered schemes	Non-WBC premises	Other	TOTAL
CAUSES												
Slips, trips & falls on the level				1								1
Falls up/down stairs										1		1
Falls from height												0
Walked into something												0
Driving												0
Falling/dropped objects												0
Loading/unloading vehicles								1				1
Handling objects										1		1
Lifting/carrying/pushing/pulling												0
Tools/ machinery/ hand tools												0
Cooking/kitchen work												0
Cleaning												0
Other												0
TOTAL	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	4

INJURIES												
No injury												0
Minor bump or knock												0
Minor cuts & grazes												0
Bruising				1						1		2
Larger cuts / puncture wounds								1				1
Burns & scalds												0
Strains, sprains & pains												0
Back pain												0
Fractures												0
Eye injuries										1		1
Other injury												0
TOTAL	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	4

A. Major												0
B. Serious												0
C. Minor	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	4

A. Treatment at hospital (24 hours) or major injury (RIDDOR reportable - Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995)

B. More than 3 days absence from work (RIDDOR reportable)

C. No absence or return to work within 3 days (not reportable)

Summary of Accident Report Forms Completed For Employees

Accident details

<u>Building</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>What happened</u>	<u>Injury</u>
The Vyne	Dining Room	IP's shoes were wet as it was raining outside, she slipped on the floor.	bruised knees, sore feet
Client's home in St Johns	external steps	IP tripped on step going through a second door. She was carrying hot meals so couldn't use her hands to save herself. Went down hard on her front.	bruised both knees and hand. Tops of arms, underarms and across the front of her chest hurt.
Client's home in West Byfleet		IP was at the Client's home using an angle grinder to cut up a section of galvanised rail. Although he was wearing eye protection, a tiny particle flew up and into his eye.	scratched surface of eye. Returned to work 5 days later (12/7/21)
out in the Borough delivering meals	outside van	IP closed the side door of the van on his finger after turning oven chambers off	index finger split open, bleeding heavily

Serious accidents reported to HSE under RIDDOR

No accidents to staff were reported under RIDDOR.

* Note – IP is an abbreviation for “injured person”. This avoids the use of their name, for privacy.

ACCIDENT ANALYSIS SUMMARY TABLE

Number of accidents to **NON-EMPLOYEES** in the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022

LOCATION	Brockhill	Car Parks	Civic Offices	Centres	Centre grounds/ car park	Comm Meals Kitchens	H G Wells	Paths & roads	Sheltered schemes	Non-WBC premises	Other	TOTAL
CAUSES												
Slips, trips & falls on the level		2										2
Falls up/down stairs												0
Falls From height												0
Walked into something												0
Driving												0
Falling/dropped objects											1	1
Loading/unloading vehicles												0
Handling objects												0
Lifting/carrying/pushing/pulling												0
Tools/ machinery/ hand tools												0
Cooking/kitchen work												0
Cleaning												0
Other			1									1
TOTAL	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4
INJURIES												
No injury			1									1
Minor bump or knock												0
Minor cuts & grazes												0
Bruising												0
Larger cuts / puncture wounds		1									1	2
Burns & scalds												0
Strains, sprains & pains												0
Back pain												0
Fractures												0
Eye injuries												0
Other injury		1										1
TOTAL	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4
INJURY SEVERITY												
A. Major												0
B. Serious		1									1	2
C. Minor	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		2

A. Major injury as defined by RIDDOR (even if accident was not work related and thus not reportable)

B. Non-employee taken directly to hospital for treatment (RIDDOR reportable if the accident was work related)

C. Would not have been RIDDOR-reportable even if work related

Summary of Accident Report Forms Completed For Non-Employees

Ill health – not work related

<u>Building</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>What happened</u>	<u>Injury</u>
Civic Offices	One Stop Shop	IP had a seizure whilst in the One Stop Shop area. She became unresponsive and her lips started to go blue. She was put in the recovery position and an ambulance was called. After about 5 minutes, the IP became responsive again. She was taken to hospital for tests.	None

Accident details

<u>Building</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>What happened</u>	<u>Injury</u>
Goldsworth Park recreation ground		Child was playing football and goal post fell on his head. Notified by claim for compensation, no accident report received	gash on head
Heathside car park	top deck	tripped on raised bump on top deck of Heathside car park. Notified by claim for compensation, no accident report received	nose injury, bruises on arms and grazes on forehead

Serious accidents reported to HSE under RIDDOR

<u>Building</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>What happened</u>	<u>Injury</u>
blue car park	car ramp to top deck	IP fell in car park on ice when walking in an area that had been closed off due to the icy conditions.	cut above left eye, two black eyes and scratched nose

* Note – IP is an abbreviation for “injured person”. This avoids the use of their name, for privacy.

Freedom Leisure**Accident stats**
01/04/21- 31/03/22**Woking LC****Total visitors** 249,160**Percentage of accidents** 0.07%

	Total accidents	RIDDOR reportable	Non RIDDOR reportable	Sport related	Outside (Playground/ skate park/ car park)
Customer	186	0	186	110	10
Staff	2	0	2	0	0
Total	188	0	188	110	10

PITP**Total visitors** 195,856**Percentage of accidents** 0.04%

	Total accidents	RIDDOR reportable	Non RIDDOR reportable	Sport related	Outside (Playground/ skate park/ car park)
Customer	78	0	78	11	9
Staff	3	0	3	0	0
Total	81	0	81	11	9

Sports Box**Total visitors** 96,783**Percentage of accidents** 0.02%

	Total accidents	RIDDOR reportable	Non RIDDOR reportable	Sport related	Outside (Playground/ skate park/ car park)
Customer	24	0	24	21	0
Staff	1	0	1	0	0
Total	25	0	25	21	0

Eastwood (since October 2021)**Total visitors** 68,028**Percentage of accidents** 0.02%

	Total accidents	RIDDOR reportable	Non RIDDOR reportable	Sport related	Outside (Playground/ skate park/ car park)
Customer	19	0	19	18	0
Staff	1	0	1	0	0
Total	20	0	20	18	0

Appendix 3 – summary of eLearning courses

name of course	Asbestos Awareness	Conflict Resolution	COSHH	Display Screen Equipment	Driver Awareness	Fire Safety Awareness	First Aid	Food Safety level 1	Food Safety level 2
Completed by the end of this financial year	42	167	30	121	168	251	34	21	14
Completed after the end of the last financial year	26	136	9	240	92	157	59	9	13
Total of courses completed	68	303	39	361	260	408	93	30	27
Courses started but not completed				13					
Courses not started				44					
Outstanding courses	3	40	0	57	23	49	20	0	3

name of course	Legionella Essentials	Manual Handling Awareness	Mental Health Awareness	Office Health & Safety	Personal Travel Safety	Risk Assessment	Slips, Trips & Falls	Working at Height
Completed by the end of this financial year	19	167	260	179	379	27	185	49
Completed after the end of the last financial year	24	232	137	144	53	17	224	25
Total of courses completed	43	399	397	323	432	44	409	74
Courses started but not completed				24				
Courses not started				70				
Outstanding courses	4	58	60	94	25	17	48	5

total courses completed by the end of this financial year	2113
total courses completed after the end of the last financial year	1597
grand total of courses completed	3710

total of outstanding courses	506	of which	37	courses started but not completed
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Appendix 3 – summary of eLearning courses

Please note

- 1) The course statistics shown on page 1 are as of 7 September 2022.
- 2) The number of staff shown on page 1 relates to **current** staff as at the time of writing and does not include those who left before this report was written. This is because when staff leave, their log in to the WorkRite training portal is deactivated and deactivated accounts are not included in the reports that can be run on courses completed. Therefore, the actual number of staff who completed an eLearning course might be higher than the number listed in the summary on page 1.
- 3) The values for outstanding course include staff who have only recently started employment with the Council, so have only just been allocated a course.

STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE – 5 OCTOBER 2022

MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT

Executive Summary

This report advises the Committee of complaints, submitted under the Members' Code of Conduct, received by the Monitoring Officer between 1 August 2021 and 31 July 2022.

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to:

RESOLVE That

- (i) the report detailing the complaints, submitted under the Members' Code of Conduct, received by the Monitoring Officer between 1 August 2021 and 31 July 2022 be noted; and
- (ii) the Monitoring Officer be advised of any areas of concern upon which the Committee would like further information and/or further work carried out.

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

Background Papers:	None.
Reporting Person:	Joanne McIntosh, Director of Legal and Democratic Services / Monitoring Officer Email: joanne.mcintosh@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3038
Contact Person:	Joanne McIntosh, Director of Legal and Democratic Services / Monitoring Officer Email: joanne.mcintosh@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3038
Date Published:	27 September 2022

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Arrangements for Dealing with Standards Allegations under the Localism Act 2011, adopted by the Council, provide for the Monitoring Officer to submit an annual report to the Standards and Audit Committee with appropriate details of complaints received.
- 1.2 This report details complaints received by the Monitoring Officer between 1 August 2021 and 31 July 2022.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to seek to promote and maintain high standards of conduct amongst Members and to ensure members of the Committee and others to whom the report is circulated are updated as to complaints received and to enable them to consider learning points for the future.

2.0 Complaints Received

- 2.1 Attached at Appendix 1 is a list showing the decisions taken by the Monitoring Officer in relation to allegations made against borough councillors.
- 2.2 The Monitoring Officer received 11 complaints between 1 August 2021 and 31 July 2022. One of the complaints received during this period is still ongoing, so is not detailed in this report. The number of complaints has increased by 1 complaint from 10 complaints in the previous corresponding year to 11 complaints.
- 2.3 The identity of all Councillors complained of has been anonymised and a brief description of the complaint provided. It is felt that such information should remain confidential unless and until any complaint results in an open hearing before the Hearings Sub-Committee.
- 2.4 In respect of the 11 complaints received a total of 6 related to social media content. Whilst I do not anticipate an increase in complaints relating to social media content is uncommon, I do consider that it is an area in which we can improve through training and guidance. Councillors have been invited to two separate training sessions over the last six months and social media training shall now take place as part of the new Member training programme (all Members shall be invited to attend).

3.0 Advice and Guidance

- 3.1 Councillors are reminded that in respect of social media, they are governed by the Code of Conduct for members, when acting in their official capacity. A Councillor is acting in their "official capacity" and any conduct may fall within the Code whenever you:
 - a) Conduct the business of the Authority; or
 - b) Act, claim to act or give the impression you are acting as a representative of the Authority; or
 - c) Act as a representative of the Authority.
- 3.2 Councillors should always think carefully before they make a social media post; Councillors are personally responsible for the content published on any form of social media. Social media sites are in the public domain and it is important to ensure you are confident of the nature of the information you publish. Once published, content is almost impossible to control and may be manipulated without your consent, used in different contexts, or further distributed.
- 3.2 Councillors are reminded that they should not publish or report on meetings which are private or internal (where no members of the public are present or it is of a confidential nature) or exempt reports (which contain confidential information or matters which are exempt under the provision of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985). Should you have any

queries in respect of a particular meeting or content then Councillors should not hesitate to contact Council Officers for advice.

- 3.3 Councillors should be mindful of public perception; frequent use of mobile devices during meetings may give the public the impression that councillors are not fully considering the points made during the debate of an item in order to contribute to the decision that is to be made. Even though the frequent use of such devices during meetings may be in a Councillor capacity and necessary for the good conduct of the meeting, Councillors should seek to use mobile devices sparingly, discreetly and with common sense at meetings, considering the impression they are giving to others.
- 3.4 Social Media policy documents and guidance for Councillors is being drafted and shall be presented to a future meeting of the Standards and Audit Committee for consideration.
- 3.5 The LGA has produced various resources to support councils and councillors to maintain high standards of conduct and behaviour in public life which are openly available. Councillors conduct and guidance on standards can be found using the below link:-

[Councillor conduct and standards | Local Government Association](#)

- 3.6 Further to the above guidance the LGA has produced a series of guides to support councillors in using social media. These include:-
- Overview of social media for councillors
 - Guide to the role of councillors on social media
 - Guide to creating content on social media
 - Guide to tackling online abuse
 - Guide to creating accessible social media content
 - Guide to using facebook
 - Guide to using Instagram
 - Guide to using Twitter; and
 - Guide to using YouTube

These guides can be found at: [Social media guidance for councillors | Local Government Association](#)

- 3.3 Given, the increase in the number of complaints surrounding social media content I shall circulate a link to the LGA guidance to all Councillors, reiterating my above advice and encouraging them to read the guidance.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 The Committee is asked to note the cases referred to in Appendix 1; and to advise the Monitoring Officer of any areas of concern upon which they would like further information and/or further work done

5.0 Corporate Strategy

The Committee's discussion in public about decisions taken on ethical standards allegations against councillors and consideration of any learning points for the future is an important element of good corporate governance and reinforces the Council's commitment to be open and accountable to its residents.

6.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

- 6.1 There is a financial cost to the Council if complaints are passed to external consultants for investigation/report.

Equalities and Human Resources

- 6.2 The Equality Act 2010 places specific duties on local authorities. Councillors have a central role to play in ensuring that equality issues are integral to the local authority's performance and strategic aims. The Members' Code of Conduct provides that Members should promote equalities and that they do not discriminate unlawfully against any person.

Legal

- 6.3 The statutory background can be found in the Localism Act 2011, Part 1 Chapters 6 and 7 ("the Act") and the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 ("the Regulations") made thereunder.

7.0 Engagement and Consultation

- 7.1 Given the nature of the report before the Committee, it would not be appropriate to undertake an engagement or consultation exercise in respect of its content.

REPORT ENDS

Appendix 1 - Code of Conduct Complaints

Date of Decision Notice	Complainant	Independent Person Consulted	Summary Details of Complaint	Decision	Outcome	Status
08/07/2021	Member of the Public	Yes	Complaint about behaviour during course of private business.	The Councillor was not acting as a Councillor at the time the comments were made on the social media platform. The Code of Conduct does not apply. No further action to be taken.	Not upheld	Closed
02/08/2021	Member of the Public	Yes	Seek to use position as a Councillor to seek/gain an advantage.	There was no arguable case that the Councillor had breached the Code of Conduct. The complaint did not merit formal investigation.	Not upheld	Closed
11/02/2022	Member of the Public and Councillor	Yes	Allegations of bullying and harassment. Social Media Content.	There was no arguable case that the Councillor had breached the Code of Conduct. The complaint did not merit formal investigation. Acknowledged that Social Media training would be greatly beneficial to Councillors.	Not upheld.	Closed
11/02/2022	Member of the Public and Councillor	Yes	Allegations of bullying and harassment.	There was no arguable case that the Councillor had breached the Code of Conduct.	Not upheld.	Closed

Members' Code of Conduct

			Social Media Content.	The complaint did not merit formal investigation. Acknowledged that Social Media training would be greatly beneficial to Councillors		
24/02/2022	Councillor	Yes	Social Media Content.	There was no arguable case that the Councillor had breached the Code of Conduct. The complaint did not merit formal investigation.	Not upheld	Closed
21/03/2022	Councillor	Yes	Social Media Content.	The matter was resolved through informal resolution (apology) and training.	Resolved through informal resolution.	Closed
12/05/2022	Councillor	Yes	Inappropriate behaviour during a Council meeting.	There was no arguable case that the Councillor had breached the Code of Conduct. The complaint did not merit formal investigation.	Not upheld	Closed
07/08/22	Councillor	Yes	Social Media Content and confidentiality of Council information.	The matter was resolved through informal resolution (apology).	Resolved through informal resolution	Closed
23/06/2022	Councillor	Yes	Behaviours and Social Media Content.	There was no arguable case that the Councillor had breached the Code of Conduct.	Not upheld	Closed

Members' Code of Conduct

				The complaint did not merit formal investigation.		
Ongoing	Member of the Public	Yes	Social Media Content	Ongoing – it would not be appropriate to comment at this time.		
08/08/2022	Member of the Public	Yes	Behaviour during course of private business.	The Councillor was not acting as a Councillor at the time but in a private capacity. The Code of Conduct does not apply. No further action to be taken.	Not upheld	Closed

STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE – 5 OCTOBER 2022

OMBUDSMEN COMPLAINTS

Executive Summary

The Committee is responsible for the oversight of payments in cases of maladministration that are neither disputed nor significant (which are dealt with by the Monitoring Officer).

This report provides details of recent complaints to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman.

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to:

RESOLVE That the position regarding complaints to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman be noted.

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

Background Papers: None.

Reporting Person: Joanne McIntosh, Director of Legal and Democratic Services / Monitoring Officer
Email: joanne.mcintosh@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3038

Contact Person: Joanne McIntosh, Director of Legal and Democratic Services / Monitoring Officer
Email: joanne.mcintosh@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3038

Date Published: 27 September 2022

STA22-016

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council's Constitution provides for the Standards and Audit Committee to have "oversight of payments in cases of maladministration which are neither disputed nor significant (which are dealt with by the Monitoring Officer)." Full Council retains responsibility for "disputed/significant payments in cases of maladministration".
- 1.2 At its meeting on 7 July 2016, the Committee asked for an annual report on Ombudsmen complaints. The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman provides Councils with an Annual Review letter in July each year. It is, therefore, sensible for the annual report to be submitted to the September meeting of the Committee.

2.0 Ombudsmen

- 2.1 The Council is subject to the oversight of two Ombudsmen, the Housing Ombudsman and the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman.
- 2.2 The Housing Ombudsman considers complaints arising from the provision of housing by the Council if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of New Vision Homes/the Council's consideration of the complaint.
- 2.3 The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman considers complaints arising from the provision of other, non-housing, services by the Council if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the Council's consideration of the complaint.

3.0 Complaints submitted to the Ombudsmen

- 3.1 The 2022 Annual Review letter from the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman gives a summary of statistics for decisions made by the Ombudsman on complaints, about the Council, for the year ended 31 March 2022. All data from the report, along with annual letters sent to individual authorities can be found on the Ombudsman's website through the interactive map. The map now holds four years of data, giving the annual summary of complaints plus compliance rates and the changes which have made on the back of investigations, for each local authority in England. The map can be found using the following link:-

Your council's performance (lgo.org.uk) (<https://www.lgo.org.uk/your-councils-performance>)

- 3.2 The Annual Review letter confirms that the Ombudsman undertook a total of 1 detailed investigation into a complaint against the Council for the period between 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. The Ombudsman's website states that it upheld one complaint.
- 3.3 A copy of the decision notice can be found at Appendix 1. In summary, the complainant complained that the Council incorrectly sent him a council tax summons. The Council had already acknowledged this matter, altered its records, and apologised. As such, the Ombudsman did not investigate the complaint as the Council had remedied the matter.
- 3.4 The Annual Review letter does not detail the total number of complaints made against the Council. For the year ended 31 March 2022, this was eleven. This is the same number of complaints as the previous year. Of these eleven, the Ombudsman closed 6 after initial enquiries, 2 were incomplete/invalid, 1 complaint was referred back to the Council and on 1 complaint they gave advice.
- 3.5 The Council's figures are comparable to neighbouring authorities, as outlined in the below comparison table:

Authority	Investigations	Upheld
Waverley	4	2
Guildford	2	2
Spelthorne	1	1
Surrey Heath	0	0
Reigate and Banstead	4	3
Runnymede	1	0
Epsom and Ewell	3	2
Tandridge	5	4
Elmbridge	4	0

- 3.6 The Housing Ombudsman does not issue an Annual Review letter. This report, therefore, details cases considered by the Housing Ombudsman since those referred to in last year's annual report, i.e. the period between 1 September 2021 and 1 August 2022.
- 3.7 The Housing Ombudsman is currently investigating one compliant. As the matter is ongoing I shall not provide any details at this time.
- 3.8 On 13 June 2022 the Housing Ombudsman made a decision in respect of a complaint originally raised by the complainant to the Ombudsman in December 2020. The Housing Ombudsman apologised for the delay in issuing their response, stating that it was "due to a case handling error and the previous case worker leaving the organisation."
- 3.9 The complaint was in respect of the landlord's response to the resident's request to adapt the property by adding a second rear door to the bedroom, anti-social behaviour issues and failures in the Council's complaints handling process. The Housing Ombudsman found that the delay in the Council's complaints handling process was a service failure and ordered the Council to pay the complainant £150 for any distress and inconvenience this may have caused. Payment was made promptly. The Housing Ombudsman confirmed that in accordance with paragraph 54 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was no maladministration.
- 3.10 Given the timing of the complaint, between 2019 – 2020, it is not considered that any immediate actions need to be taken by the Council at this present time. Lessons have already been learnt and procedures improved.

4.0 Conclusions

Although it would be preferable for there to be no complaints to the Ombudsmen, this is unlikely to ever happen due to (i) the varied nature of the services provided by the Council and (ii) the number of recipients of those services. That said, the number of complaints is not disproportionate. There are no matters of concern which the Monitoring Officer needs to bring to the attention of the Committee.

The Council treats every complaint received as an opportunity to identify learning outcomes and improve service provision. These complaints are valuable not only in identifying service improvements but in improving public perception and satisfaction with the Council as a whole.

5.0 Corporate Strategy

- 5.1 The publication of this report demonstrates the Council's commitment to openness and transparency.

6.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

- 6.1 Poor complaint handling could be a reputational and financial risk to the council, especially with the increase in people using social media to raise awareness of issues.
- 6.2 There is a risk that the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman will report against the council which means the report is published outlining the council's failures.

Equalities and Human Resources

- 6.3 None.

Legal

- 6.4 The Council is obliged to respond to complaints of maladministration through the Ombudsman. The Local Government Act 1974, prescribes the way in which the Ombudsman conducts investigations.

7.0 Engagement and Consultation

- 7.1 The nature of the content of the report does not lend itself to an engagement and/or consultation exercise.

REPORT ENDS

The Ombudsman's final decision

Summary: Mr X complains that the Council incorrectly sent him a council tax summons. We will not investigate this complaint because the Council has remedied the matter.

The complaint

1. Mr X complains that the Council incorrectly sent him a council tax summons.

The Ombudsman's role and powers

2. We investigate complaints about 'maladministration' and 'service failure'. In this statement, I have used the word 'fault' to refer to these. We provide a free service, but must use public money carefully. We may decide not to start or continue with an investigation if we are satisfied with the actions a council has taken or proposes to take. (*Local Government Act 1974, section 24A(7), as amended*)

How I considered this complaint

3. I considered information provided by the complainant and the Council.
4. I considered the Ombudsman's Assessment Code.
5. The complainant has commented on my draft decision.

My assessment

6. The Council sent a council tax bill and summons to a property Mr X owns despite being aware that his address for such correspondence was different.
7. Mr X says that the letter was addressed to his wife who died six years ago and this caused him distress.
8. The Council apologised and altered their records to ensure that this error did not reoccur. They have waived all costs relating to the summons.
9. Mr X wants compensation from the Council.
10. Whilst the correspondence would have been upsetting for Mr X we are not persuaded that the Council need do more than the apology they have already given, the correction of the records and the waiving of the costs.

Final decision

11. I do not intend to investigate this complaint because the Council has remedied the matter to the Ombudsman's satisfaction.

Investigator's decision on behalf of the Ombudsman