

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.

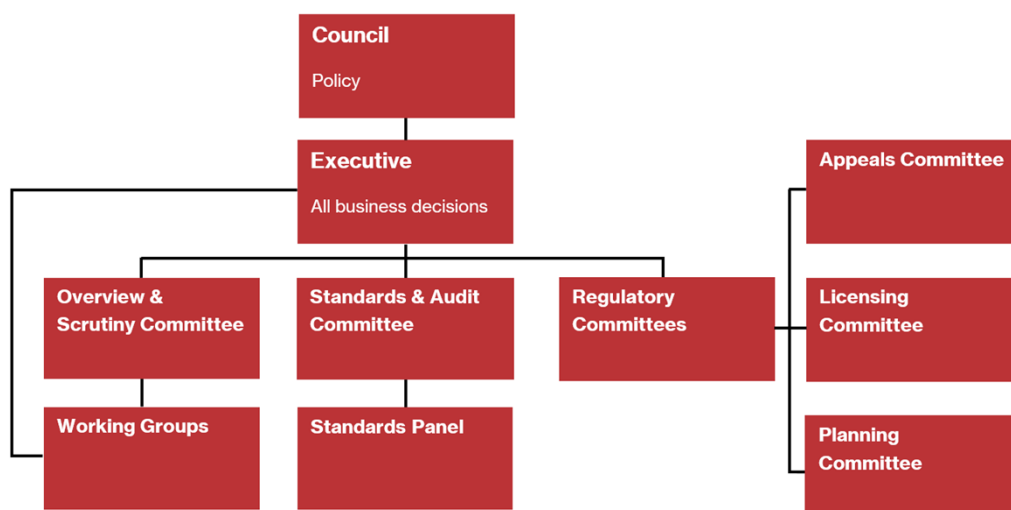
The arrangements required for gathering assurances for the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement provide an opportunity for the Council to consider the robustness of the governance arrangements in place and to consider this as a corporate issue that affects all parts of the Council. It also 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

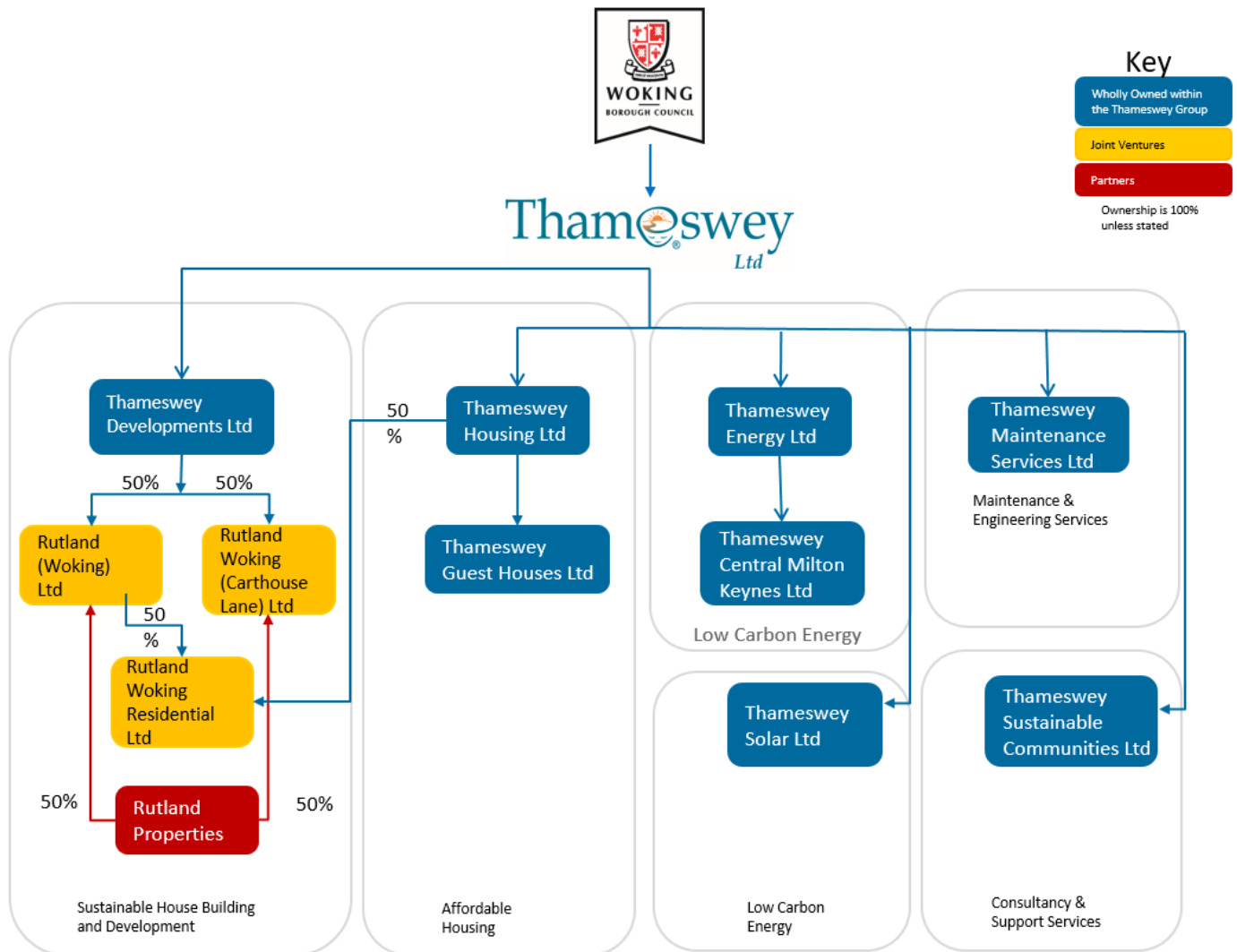
The Council operates a Leader and Executive system of governance, with an Overview and Scrutiny Committee in place to scrutinise the work of the Executive.



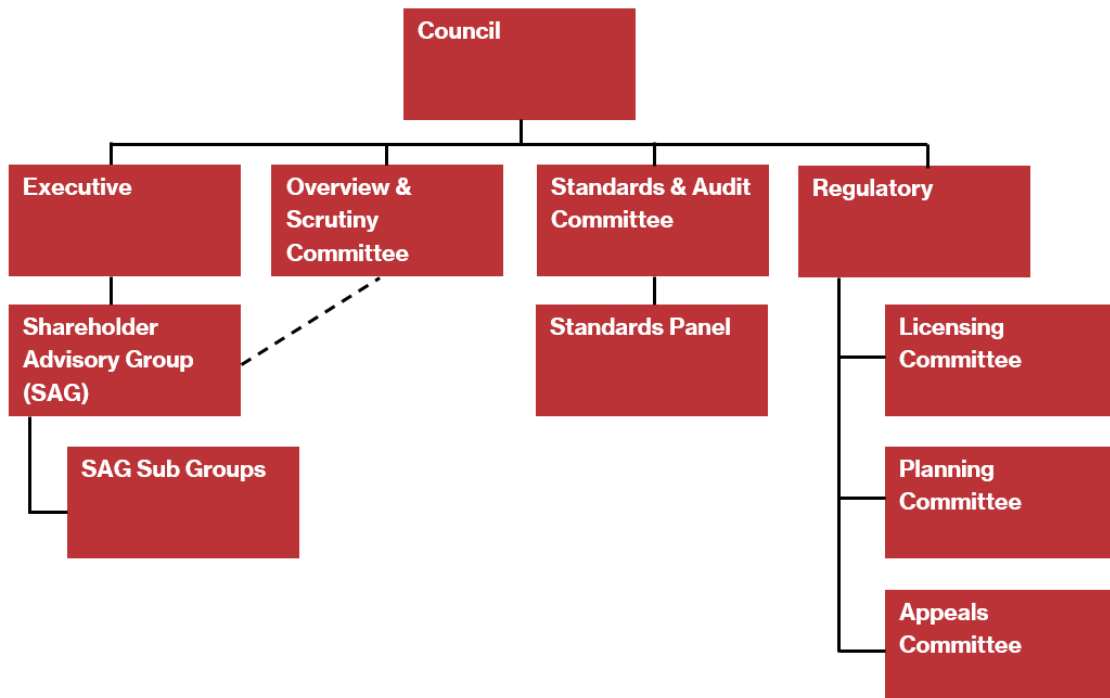
Company Governance

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