

Annual Governance Statement

Year ended 31 March 2022



*Working for
Warwickshire*

Annual Governance Statement 2021/22

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1 Executive Summary

Warwickshire County Council's ambition is to make Warwickshire the best it can be, sustainable now and for future generations. We want Warwickshire to be a brilliant County in which to grow up, work and prosper and grow older.

Our new Council Plan <https://api.warwickshire.gov.uk/documents/WCCC-1980322935-2012> describes how the council will meet the challenges ahead and make the most of opportunities. To be successful the council must have a solid foundation of good governance and sound financial management. This new Plan builds on our previous Council Plan <https://api.warwickshire.gov.uk/documents/WCCC-708-483> and Recovery Plan <https://api.warwickshire.gov.uk/documents/WCCC-1980322935-1740> which have been in place for the whole of the 2021/22 financial year.

Warwickshire's Code of Corporate Governance ensures that we are doing the right things, in the right way, in line with our values. A copy of the Council's Code is available on our website at <http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/corporategovernance>. Each year the council is required to produce an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) which describes how its corporate governance arrangements set out in the Code of Governance have been working. This Statement gives assurances on compliance for the year ending 31 March 2022 and up to the date of approval of the Statement of Accounts.

The Leader of the Council and Chief Executive recognise the importance of having a solid foundation of good governance and sound financial management and commit to continue to further enhance our governance arrangements to enable delivery of our Council Plan.

2 The Governance Framework

We are responsible for delivering public services for the benefit of the people of Warwickshire, operating in line with the law and proper accounting standards, and for using public money economically, efficiently and effectively. We also have a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to continually review and improve the way we work, while at the same time offering value for money services.

To meet our responsibility, we have put in place proper governance arrangements for overseeing what we do. These arrangements are intended to make sure that we do the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, open and accountable manner. These arrangements consist of all the systems, processes, culture and values which direct and control the way in which we work and through which we account to, engage with and lead our communities.

We have approved and adopted a **Code of Corporate Governance**, which sets out the principles of the *CIPFA/SOLACE Framework Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2016)*

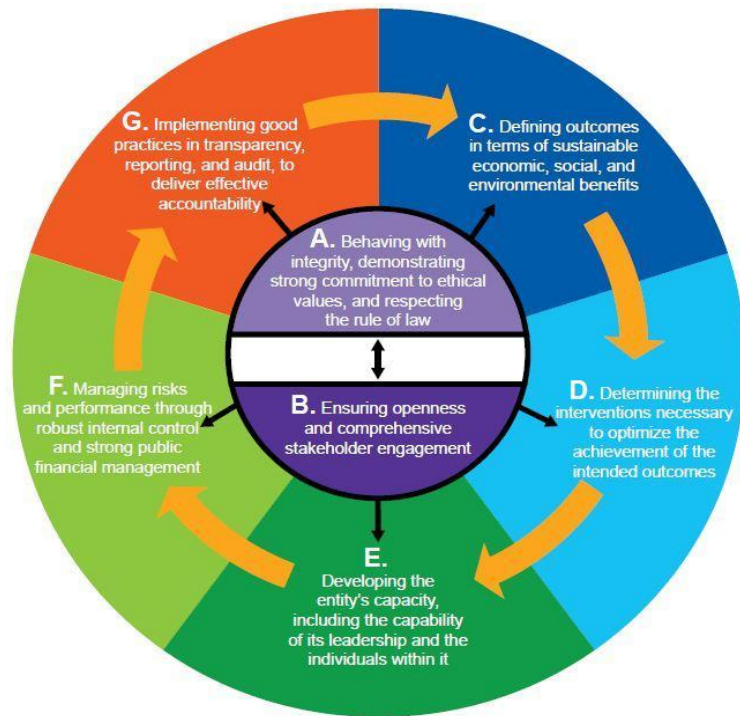


Figure 1: CIPFA's Principles of Good Governance

The Council's Code of Corporate Governance was updated in 2021 and approved by Cabinet in April 2021, to present how our governance arrangements support each core governance principle and reflect organisational structures and processes. The full details of our current code and how we meet the seven Principles of Good Governance can be found on our website here: <http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/corporategovernance>

In February 2022, our new Council Plan was agreed by Council. The new plan is effective from 1st April 2022 and our Code of Governance will be reviewed against the new Council Plan to ensure that we continue to align the governance principles to our strategic priorities and areas of focus. The new Council Plan also takes forward and expands on the actions previously outlined in our COVID -19 Recovery Plan, which was launched in September 2021. This recognises that many of the actions introduced in response to the COVID pandemic have become part of the way in which we now do business. Our 2021/22 review of compliance against the Code of Governance recognised this and consequently we have not separately entered specific COVID related actions in the review.

We continue to monitor external factors that may have an impact on the Council's governance arrangements and will take appropriate action where necessary. The Russian invasion of Ukraine is one such area. At its meeting in March 2022 the Council expressed its support for Ukraine, and on the 7th of March the Pension Fund Investment Sub Committee condemned the invasion of Ukraine by Russia and confirmed that it was instructing fund managers, including the local government pension pool, Border to Coast, of which we are one member, to cease investment into Russia, and we will work with our fund managers to ensure that there should be no further investment into Russian owned or controlled assets and that the Fund's investment activity follows all current and future government requirements. The Warwickshire Pension Fund's assessment of Russian holdings at the time was that they made up approximately 0.2% of the total fund value. We continue to review our governance arrangements and will amend if appropriate.

The Code of Governance will be reviewed at least every 4 years, and more frequently if needed. Consequently, governance arrangements in the Code are not repeated in the AGS, which will focus on compliance, effectiveness and improvements to the Framework.

The aim of the governance framework

Our framework allows us to direct resources in accordance with our priorities, monitor how we are achieving our strategic aims and ambitions, and to consider whether they have helped us to deliver appropriate services. The Framework also aims to assure we deliver value for money, by applying governance processes aligned to:

- Principle C: defining outcomes that have impact.
- Principle D: optimising achievement of outcomes that are effective.
- Principle E: strong financial management that delivers economic and efficient solutions.



Figure 2: The Council's Core Purpose and Priority Outcomes

The Annual Governance Statement provides assurances that these processes are working in practice and provide services in line with our priorities by delivering on our supporting priority of Making the Best Use of Resources.

Financial Management Code of Practice

Our Code of Corporate Governance was enhanced by adopting CIPFA's Financial Management Code of Practice in 2021-22 and compliance with the Code is reviewed on an annual basis. The annual refresh of the self-assessment was reported to the Audit and Standards Committee in March 2022. This reiterated that the Council complies with the standard. The Committee also considered progress on the delivery of the action plan approved in June 2021 and approved a new action plan for 2022/23.

We are alert to ensuring our governance arrangements support the Council as a whole and individual services to deliver value for money across all our activity and at all levels of accountability, and we continue to seek to adapt and improve our governance arrangements in that regard.

Commercial activity

During the year the Council has continued to progress the development and establishment of the Warwickshire Property Development Group (WPDG) and the Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund (WRIF). Governance arrangements are in place for these bodies and the Council has approved and monitors the business plans. Regular update reports are submitted to appropriate committees and a specific Member Oversight Group for both.

3 Review of compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance

Our review and update of the Code of Corporate Governance <http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/corporategovernance> has confirmed that arrangements under each of seven governance principles continue to be applied. The COVID pandemic made 2020-21 a year of significant change which required the Council, wherever required, to adapt existing governance arrangements as part of our response to the pandemic and plans for recovery. Many of these changes have now become established as part of the Council's governance arrangements as we adapt to a new way of working. We have set out below, for each governance principle, our self-assessment of compliance in the year.

Table1: Summary of Compliance against the Code of Corporate Governance

Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law	
Compliance Overview	The key policies, procedures and practices set out in the Code of Corporate Governance remained in place and were applied throughout the year. Our key behaviours and supporting values which underpin our governance arrangements are at the heart of all we do and continued to be central to how we appraise our performance.
	We have continued to meet the Public Sector Duty, as set out in the Equality Act 2010 and do not consider that we have unlawfully discriminated in the provision of services whether delivered by us or commissioned externally. Equality impact assessments have also continued to be produced to inform all appropriate decisions during the financial year.
	<p>Integrity is embedded in our behaviours and the supporting values of being accountable and trustworthy. To ensure our behaviours are upheld we have codes of conduct for officers and members, registers of gifts and hospitality, registers of financial interests, and policies on anti-fraud and whistleblowing.</p> <p>We reviewed our Member Code of Conduct against the LGA Model Code, and a new updated Code of Conduct was agreed at Council in July 2021. https://democracy.warwickshire.gov.uk/documents/s14878/Revised%20Member%20Code%20of%20Conduct.pdf</p> <p>We include ethical values in policies and procedures for all areas including procurement and partnership working. We have a Complaints Policy and a corporate complaints and feedback procedure to ensure that all complaints are investigated properly and are responded to as quickly as possible (http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/complaints). We appreciate the diversity of our customers, workforce and the wider Warwickshire community and are committed to Equality, Diversity and</p>

Inclusion and fulfilling our Public Sector Equality Duty. This is integral to everything we do including policy development, service delivery and partnership working to ensure that we do not unlawfully discriminate in the services we deliver or commission (<http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/equality>).

Our Constitution, including Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations were reviewed and updated during the financial year to ensure that they remained legislatively compliant and reflect the organisation's operating arrangements. Changes were approved by Council at its meeting in December 2021. (<https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/constitution>).

The Constitution sets out the decision-making framework to ensure that all officers, key post holders and Members can fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative requirements. All our reports to member bodies receive financial and legal checks prior to submission to ensure they comply with regulatory requirements. Our Monitoring Officer receives weekly reports to alert her to any legal issues which she shares with the S.151 / Deputy S151 Officers and the Head of Paid Service. The Head of Paid Service, Section 151 / Deputy S151 Officers and Monitoring Officer meet regularly to ensure any regulatory requirements are addressed and any regulatory risks are discussed and visible.

An independent review of scrutiny arrangements was undertaken, with conclusions and recommendations considered by the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees in February, March and June 2021, and the final recommendations endorsed by Cabinet and approved by Council in September 2021.

Formal Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings, including those related to the Warwickshire Pension Fund, continued to be held virtually up to the end of April 2021, after which face to face meetings were re-instated to ensure legal compliance and which were compliant with access to information and public access requirements.

We prepared for and delivered, with our district and borough council partners, Covid secure elections in May 2021

A formal induction programme for members is undertaken following each quadrennial election which covers the legal principles governing decision making and the code of conduct. The induction programme incorporates commercial awareness to ensure that members understand their responsibilities in relation to governance of commercial activity. Member induction and training also covers a broader understanding of Council finances and the key Committee and Officer roles responsible for governing our finances as well as the wider responsibilities of the Council and the services it provides.

All officers with budget responsibilities receive training on general financial management and specifics around financial policies, procedures, systems and propriety.

The Joint Consultative Committee meets on a quarterly basis providing the opportunity for elected employee representatives to meet with senior management and discuss issues affecting the whole workforce including Health & Safety. Teacher Trade Unions meet separately with the Assistant Director of Education to discuss Education and Schools specific items. We have

a positive working relationship with the Trade Unions, and they are proactively involved at a Directorate level in relation to change management and individual casework.

We are registered as a data controller under the Data Protection Act as we collect, and process personal information and we have a named Data Protection officer, a role shared by the Corporate Records Manager and the Information Rights Manager. We have General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliant procedures that explain how we use and share information and arrangements for members of the public to access information. We have adopted the model publication scheme produced by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000. <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/publicationschemeguide>

We have consistent governance arrangements for our trading companies and wholly owned companies including the newly established Warwickshire Property and Development Group (WPDG) and Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund (WRIF): We have a shareholder agreement with each company which governs our relationship with the company and sets out which decisions require shareholder approval: Annual General Meetings are held to ensure the Council is fully informed of the company's performance; and Directors of each company have received "conflict of interest" awareness training and we actively monitor the risk of potential conflicts. Where appropriate, we also support new WCC appointed Directors with training on how to perform their role as Directors effectively. Investments are governed by appropriate documents, for example loan agreements. The Council operates an anti-money laundering policy, and the Assistant Director Finance (Deputy Section 151 Officer) is the Council's Anti-Money Laundering Responsible Officer (AMLRO).

We continue to apply Public Health England and government guidelines in respect of COVID secure working and reflecting Government advice during this period, our offices and buildings have remained open throughout but with limited use, and we have encouraged many of our staff to continue to work from home wherever possible. A thorough review of our premises has been undertaken to ensure that we provide safe working arrangements at all locations as more staff return to office working. We continue to monitor office usage and ensure suitable safeguards are in place to maintain a safe working environment. In reviewing the changing working arrangements, we continue to monitor risks to information security, including cybercrime, that may arise, and we continue to maintain prevention, control, testing and response regimes to mitigate these risks

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Compliance Overview

The key policies, procedures and practices set out in the Code of Corporate Governance remained in place and were applied throughout the year.

Council and Committee meetings are available as webcasts (<https://warwickshire.public-l.tv/core/portal/webcasts>), and decisions are recorded and published. Meetings are now being held face to face.

We have launched a new residents' panel, 'Voice of Warwickshire', and we are improving our consultation and engagement platform 'Ask Warwickshire' to include more interactive, discussion-based activity.

The Warwickshire Youth Council represents the voice of young people in Warwickshire. Each year, young people across Warwickshire vote for self-nominated young people to represent them. Those elected meet monthly at Shire Hall and have the responsibility of campaigning and liaising with bodies of power on behalf of young people. Each area of Warwickshire also has a youth forum which represents young people at a more local level.

We have an Employee Engagement Strategy to ensure employees have a voice, managers and leaders are focusing on, coaching and developing their people and there is clear communication about the direction of our authority. This is supported by staff forums and regular staff surveys, check in surveys which measure employee engagement and our direction of travel against staff related measures.

Regular Corporate Board and Strategic Director live stream broadcasts, supported by Assistant Director and Team briefings and broadcasts which were introduced as a response to COVID are now embedded as a way to engage with our people irrespective of working arrangements (home, remote or office based).

Regular feedback is provided to staff through various mechanisms, for example through briefings, Working 4 Warwickshire, staff intranet pages etc.

Staff continue to participate in short 'Check-in' surveys focused on health and wellbeing as well as broader performance themes. Results for key indicators of well-being were analysed, followed up by Corporate Board and shared with all staff via broadcasts and dedicated areas of the intranet with links to results dashboards.

WCC, as "Corporate Parents", have high aspiration for our children in care and care experienced young people. We are committed to hearing the voice of children in care through engagement with the Children in Care Council who seek to improve services for children. <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/childrenincare>

The Warwickshire Pension Fund engages with its employers and members through the LGPS Local Pension Board which has representatives from employers and members, and through direct communications for example directly sharing new policies such as the Funding Strategy Statement for comment.

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

Compliance Overview

We had a clear set of priority outcomes in our Council Plan throughout 2021/22 and we have now launched our new Council Plan which covers the next 5 years with effect from April 2022. The new Council Plan has three priorities which cover each of the three dimensions, i.e., economic, social and environmental. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) supports the delivery of the Council Plan and is based on clear assumptions; resources align to priorities and ensure a balanced budget to sustain services and the longer-term financial health of the Council. The MTFS process, which includes scenario planning, assists with forward planning and responding to variations in financial forecasts and changes to assumptions. All Committee decisions have to identify any environmental impacts linked to the decisions in the reports.

The Council Plan which was in place throughout 2021/22, and the Covid-19 Recovery Plan, which was closed out in December 2021, were developed with members and in consultation with our stakeholders and communities and defined priority outcomes and key strategic objectives. The Council Plan was supported by specific Strategies, Strategic Plans and programmes, all geared to delivering our Council Plan/Covid Recovery plan outcomes.

A new Council Plan has been approved and is effective from 1 April 2022. The new Plan incorporates any ongoing themes from the Covid Recovery Plan and actions requiring a continued focus at Council level are included in the Integrated Delivery Plan which accompanies the Council Plan, as agreed at Cabinet in December 2021. Strategies are supported by Business Plans, key change projects and investments to develop the actions needed to deliver the outcomes. Projects and investments are scrutinised to ensure they deliver required outcomes. The Council has a rolling five-year Medium-Term Financial Strategy which is established on sound assumptions to deliver a sustainable balanced budget in the short and medium term.

The Council's Capital Programme is directed by our Integrated Capital Strategy, aligned to the Council Plan and approved by Council in February 2022 as part of the MTFS. A review has been undertaken to improve processes around capital programme management and reporting and revised processes will be introduced in 2022.

Priorities and a programme of actions for addressing the climate emergency are included in the Council Plan and all Council reports identify financial and environmental implications. Warwickshire is committed to reducing emissions from areas that the council has direct control over including own transport, gas and bought electricity to net zero by 2030 and has pledged to doing everything within our power to get our communities across Warwickshire to Net Zero by 2050 or sooner. The Council hosted a Climate Change Conference in March 2022 along with Coventry City Council, Beyond COP26 brought together key public, private and community organisations to respond to the COP26 outcomes within Coventry and Warwickshire. <https://www.warwickshireclimateemergency.org.uk/>

We are producing, with public sector, business and voluntary sector partners and Government, a costed plan and trajectory for the County to be net zero no later than 2050, that is clear with Government about resources and support necessary to deliver national and local aspirations on net zero.

Warwickshire Pension Fund has begun a review of investment strategy which will have regard to climate risk in the scope, and the Council's own Investment Strategy for non-treasury investments now has a dedicated ethical investing policy.

Warwickshire Property & Development Group (WPDG), which has been set up to deliver new affordable and market priced homes and a range of commercial, mixed use and renewable energy opportunities across the county, has been launched by the Council, which will re-invest profits back into the Council's priority activities. WPDG will play an important role in shaping Warwickshire as a place to invest, live and thrive following the COVID-19 pandemic, as part of the County Council's Warwickshire Recovery Plan. It will help the county's economic recovery, creating jobs and shaping the county as an attractive and desirable place to live and do business, while also providing a financial return for the Council that will enable it to support its priorities through re-investment.

Warwickshire Property & Development Group is part of a broader £300m package of investment alongside the Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund (WRIF) which the County Council has launched to revitalise the local economy.

The Council has set up a Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund (WRIF) which is intended to:

- Support the delivery of the Council's strategic goals and priorities as set out in the Warwickshire Council Plan 2025 and the new Council Plan effective from April 2022, COVID 19 Recovery Plan, Economic Strategy, Commercial Strategy and Place Shaping Programme;
- Support economic recovery across the region;
- Support existing businesses and bring in new businesses;
- Create and protect jobs in Warwickshire;
- Provide loans and some equity to business in a prudent way;
- Provide access to finance that helps businesses start, grow, and scale up; and
- Leverage additional resources or funding for the county through the investment and support of key growth businesses.

<https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/wrif>

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

Compliance Overview

The key arrangements for managing performance and delivery, to inform interventions, continued to operate throughout the year.

Arrangements are in place to report critical management information on the key aspects of the delivery of the Council Plan, including finance (monthly), risk and performance (quarterly) to Corporate Board and quarterly to Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny Committees.

Our Performance Framework supports the delivery of the Council Plan, and includes mechanisms to assess progress, inform actions and interventions to achieve intended outcomes. Outcome Delivery Groups, supported by the Programme Management Office, monitor and scrutinise project delivery against plans and flag actions needed to manage escalated risks and deliver project objectives.

As part of the development of the new Council Plan (effective from April 2022), we are introducing an integrated delivery plan approach which will incorporate risk and performance management. Business Intelligence dashboards and reporting will build on the extensive performance dashboards already in place and will enable effective response and decision making. Increased emphasis will be placed on benefit identification and realisation.

Each Directorate has escalation arrangements in place to its Directorate Leadership Team. Our Service Business Continuity Plans and procedures set out mitigating actions and contingency plans in response to business interruption events. We work in partnership with Coventry and Solihull Councils as part of the CSW Resilience Team, linking with the Warwickshire Local Resilience Forum to actively manage Civil Contingency requirements and responses. <https://cswprepared.org.uk/>

Delivery of our Council Plan outcomes is achieved through our business plans, strategies and programmes/projects and our Strategy and Commissioning and performance management frameworks. This is supported by our business insight and corporate policy functions. We have an appraisal system which links the Council objectives to the personal objectives and personal development plans of individuals. All proposed and active projects, funded through our investment funds, are managed in the VERTO system, which includes change control and reporting functionality to track the delivery of realisable benefits and outcomes. Our Strategies and programmes address specific challenges and opportunities as they arise

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

Compliance
Overview

The key arrangements for building our capacity and capability continued to operate throughout the year. Leadership forums, including Senior Leadership Forum were maintained and enhanced with strategy & commissioning network meetings.

A member induction and development programme is delivered each year to ensure the core development needs of members, aligned to their respective roles, are met and to take account of new and emerging issues.

Ensuring that capacity is maximised during the last 12 months has been critical to our success, and specific decisions have been made to enable this, such as system changes in Children's and Families to secure social workers. We have also committed to the National Graduate Trainee Scheme as well as reviewing our approach to apprenticeships, including increasing the starting salary to bring it in line with the national living wage

Our People Strategy ensures our workforce can deliver the Council Plan and that they remain aligned with our vision and behaviours. Direction and progress continue to be governed and monitored by the How We Work Delivery Group. The Staff and Pensions Committee provides overall oversight on the direction in relation to the development of our people and approves the Our People Strategy and annual delivery plan. Our How We Work programme invests in and delivers the right resources and tools to work as efficiently and effectively as possible. It promotes and encourages the behaviours that help to define our culture. Our Agile Working Principles set out how employees can work as efficiently and productively as possible, whilst maintaining a priority focus on service needs.

Our People Strategy recognises our staff as being our primary asset to enable the delivery of exceptional services to our communities. It is aimed at delivering our vision for the Council to be a great place to work where diverse and talented people are enabled to be their best. The Strategy is our mechanism to have an effective approach to workforce planning, reward and recognition, embedding our values, behaviours and a high-performance culture, leadership and talent development and supporting our organisational design.

We have a corporate process for annual appraisals and Personal Development Plans supported by regular 1:1 conversations. This provides the necessary clarity of expectations and behaviour, direction, support and opportunities for growth and development and allows employees and managers to have constructive discussions on performance, progress against outcomes, wellbeing and development. Our corporate appraisal process is aligned to the Behaviours Framework and our recruitment process for senior managers applies a behavioural assessment process, which included leadership capability and identifies personal development areas.

We have a Senior Leadership Forum (SLF) of our top three management tiers for sharing, shaping and developing our strategic direction, change plans and to support the delivery of those plans. The SLF has continued to meet regularly and effectively online when meeting in person has not been appropriate. We invest in the health and wellbeing of our employees with a Workplace Wellness Strategy and supporting processes including those to manage sickness absence and return to work.

The health & wellbeing of our employees remains a top priority and as well as ensuring we engage with staff as stakeholders, we have focused on building a resilient and high performing workforce:

- maintaining wellbeing and HR policy information on dedicated staff intranet sites (Keeping You Well and Working, Working4Warwickshire) with links to active internal and external support networks, resources and staff well-being check in surveys; and actions arising from those surveys; and
- regular live broadcast to staff from Corporate Board and Strategic Directors, to communicate key well-being messages, updates and Q&A.

The Council has been officially recognised by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and received a bronze level accreditation for its work in actively promoting the health and wellbeing of its staff under the Thrive at Work scheme.

The Council's move to the Cloud-based Microsoft 365 environment has secured communication and data security and has also enhanced our ability to work remotely and collaboratively. Our How We Work programme, designed to invest in and deliver the right technology and tools to work as efficiently and effectively as possible, has also supported staff with bite - size MS training sessions that could be accessed at any time.

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

Compliance Overview

The regulations, policies and governance arrangements set out in the Code of Corporate Governance have been fully applied thought the year for the Council and for Warwickshire Pension Fund.

The Council adopted a new Strategic Risk Management Framework in April 2021 and continue to apply the CIPFA Code of Practice for Managing the Risk of fraud and corruption and this is reflected in our anti-fraud policy. <http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/antifraud>

Strong financial management is achieved through a robust Medium-Term Financial Strategy process which includes comprehensive involvement of our Members and Corporate Board to enable the delivery of the outcomes and objectives we set out in our Council Plan and achieving a balance between robustness of financial management and achieving our ambitions.

Our budget is set as part of a 5-year Medium Term Financial Strategy and reviewed annually to ensure we remain prudent, robust and ambitious, whilst being flexible and responsive to emerging situations. Our robust and integrated approach to achieving strong financial management includes:

- Agreed strategies and approaches to Treasury Management, Investment, Capital resources, the effective use of Reserves and Council taxation to ensure an appropriate balance in delivering our medium-term goals and long-term sustainability.
- Attracting inward investment to the County and maximising social value for our communities through our Commercial Strategy.
- Achieving the best use of both capital and revenue investment funding by ensuring all investment proposals are supported by robust business cases and realisable benefits to enable decisions on funding.
- Continuing our drive to achieve efficiencies and savings and deliver services in more cost-effective ways through our plans to change and transform services, utilise technology, agile working and innovative ways of doing things. Specific policies, processes and practices support this.
- Regular budget monitoring and variance reporting at service and corporate level, ensuring the Council is alert to and managing emerging financial risks.
- Continually looking to review and improve our budget monitoring arrangements, having also received a substantial Internal Audit opinion for budgetary control and a full assurance opinion for Covid related financial controls and decisions.
- Corporate Board undertaking deep dive analysis of problematic budget areas alongside the plans to manage these to inform further actions.
- Financial Regulations and our financial management framework guide adherence to policies, procedures and propriety. They outline the financial roles and responsibilities of staff and Members and provide a framework for financial decision-making. Where there are specific statutory powers and duties the Financial Regulations seek to ensure these are complied with, as well as reflecting best professional practice and decision-making.
<https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/standingorders>
- Contract Standing Orders (CSOs) promote good procurement practice and public accountability. We reviewed our CSOs in 2021/22 and these were approved by Council in December 2021.
- Our S48 Scheme of Delegation for maintained schools, enables assurance of school's management of delegated budgets.

- Robust management of Pension Fund Investment through our Investment Strategy Statement and our Responsible Investment and Climate Risk Policy, approved at the June 2021 Investment Sub-committee. The Pension Fund Investments Sub Committee is supported by external financial advisers and additional independent financial advisers.

We constantly strive to improve and have conducted a robust review of our Constitution, contract standing orders and financial regulations. Improvements were identified and have been agreed by Council.

Risk management is an integral part of good management and corporate governance and is therefore at the heart of what we do. Improvements to our risk management and performance monitoring processes have been identified and incorporated into our new integrated delivery plan approach. Our approach to managing risk is explained in the Risk Management Framework. <http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/riskmanagementstrategy>

Our Performance Framework supports the delivery of the Council Plan, and includes the following mechanisms to assess progress, inform actions and interventions to achieve intended outcomes:

- progress against the Council Plan and the MTFS is assessed through Key Business Measures (KBMs) to assess the delivery of outcomes for reporting to Overview & Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet on a quarterly basis; and
- a suite of reports and dashboards provides HR, finance and performance data to Strategic Directors, Assistant Directors and third tier managers for their areas of responsibility. This enables managers to interrogate information quickly and efficiently and identify any interventions needed.

Programme and Project performance is monitored by Delivery Groups. Action plans arising from peer reviews and inspections are owned and monitored by Directorate Leadership Teams. There are a range of specific project and programme boards with appropriate service, corporate and senior representation to oversee our major transformation and change e.g. SEND Programme Board, WPDG Governance Group, WRIF Investment Panel, Children's Change Board, Commercial Delivery Group, Adults Programme Board, Agresso Development Programme Group, Capital Review Board, Gateway Group, etc. The 5 Delivery Groups then represent the organisational themes overarching groups that monitor delivery, with the Corporate Change Board having ultimate oversight at an officer level of what feeds through from the Gateway Group and Delivery Groups.

We have an effective system of internal audit delivered in line with the Public Sector Internal Auditing Standards and effective counter-fraud and corruption arrangements and whistleblowing policies and procedures. Internal audit provide advice to service areas and change projects to ensure the control environment remains strong. We have adopted the CIPFA Code of Practice for Managing the Risk of Fraud & Corruption, and this is reflected in our anti-fraud policy. <http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/antifraud>. Regular reporting on audit assurance outcomes to Audit & Standards Committee.

We gain assurances on internal control from:

- Assistant Director annual assurance statements;
- Social care quality assurance policy and procedures;
- The Internal audit work programme reports; and
- External sources of assurance including external audit opinions, statutory inspections and whole council or service specific peer reviews.

We actively promote safeguarding to prevent harm and reduce the risk of abuse or neglect, working with partners as Warwickshire Safeguarding <https://www.safeguardingwarwickshire.co.uk/>

The Council has reviewed its procurement arrangements to ensure that activity across the council demonstrates good practice, compliance with legislation, realises social value and delivers value for money and public accountability.

The resourcing of activity in respect of WPDG and WRIF includes the procurement of external specialist expertise and advice to support the robust delivery of both initiatives.

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

Compliance
Overview

We endeavour always to be open and transparent. The regulations, policies and governance arrangements set out in the Code of Corporate Governance have been applied throughout the year for the Council and for the Warwickshire Pension Fund and can be accessed here:
<https://www.warwickshirepensionfund.org.uk>

Each year we publish information on our website outlining how we spend Council Tax income.
<http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/counciltaxspending>

We have a forward plan which provides information about the key decisions that the Council has scheduled. Formal agendas, reports and minutes for all committee meetings are published on our website which ensures that people know what decisions the Council is planning to take, and the decisions taken. Live and recorded Webcasts of formal public meetings are available. <http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/democracy>

Our Corporate Board, supported by Directorate Leadership Teams, take responsibility for providing overall leadership and setting the strategic direction and specifically, for ensuring that the Council meets its statutory obligations and exercises sound corporate governance and effective resource management, and that the performance of the Authority is managed effectively, including the delivery of key aspects of our change programs.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees act as a critical friend and hold Cabinet to account for its decisions. The terms of reference for all Overview and Scrutiny Committees are defined in the Constitution. <http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/scrutiny> The Audit and Standards Committee has oversight of internal and external audit matters, the Council's arrangements for corporate governance and risk management and any other arrangements for the maintenance of probity. The Committee is chaired by an independent member and the Council has appointed a second independent member to sit on the Committee.

All reports that go to Members through a formal committee, or for leader / deputy leader / portfolio decisions, have to have a legal and finance sign-off as the final stage before being released by democratic services.

The Internal Audit Manager is designated as the Head of Internal Audit. There is an Internal Audit Board, and the internal audit service is subject to Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) external quality assessments. Sufficient audits have been conducted to provide an annual audit opinion for the year. <http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/audit>

Local Government Corporate Peer Challenge - March 2022

A team of six external peers visited Warwickshire County Council for three days. During that time, they looked at several key areas including financial capability, partnership work, culture, and readiness to deliver our new Council Plan. Initial feedback was received verbally from the team whilst on site. Several areas of best practice were recognised, and key actions identified will form part of a delivery plan which is currently under development.

Joint local area SEND inspection in Warwickshire

Between 12 July and 16 July 2021, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Warwickshire to judge the effectiveness of the area in implementing the disability and special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014.

Conclusions:

As a result of the findings of this inspection and in accordance with the Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools has determined that a Written Statement of Action is required because of significant areas of weakness in the area's practice. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector has also

determined that the local authority and the area's clinical commissioning group (CCG) are responsible for submitting the written statement to Ofsted. (Note: Under the Health and Care Act, CCGs have been absorbed into Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) – specifically into their Integrated Care Boards (ICB). Each ICB has taken on the commissioning and funding responsibilities that previously sat with their local CCGs.

Key strengths:

- Area leaders are committed to improving children and young people's outcomes. Leaders' action plans are firmly focused on the needs and ambitions of children and young people. The current area leaders have the expertise, drive, determination, and commitment to improving health, education and care outcomes for all children and young people with SEND.
- Area leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses of the area because of their accurate, well-informed and detailed self-evaluation. They commissioned two independent reviews of all SEND services to help them identify what works well and what does not across the local area. Leaders have developed and started to implement an ambitious Change Programme in response to the findings of the reviews.
- The Change Programme identifies what needs to change and why. It has prioritised and focused on key areas, with further actions appropriately planned out in the right order. This is enabling area leaders to drive the necessary improvements across the local area. However, some plans are still developing, such as those to improve neurodevelopmental pathways.
- Area leaders' rapid implementation of the Change Programme has already led to some improvements. For example, the area leaders now issue a higher than national proportion of new education, health and care (EHC) plans within statutory timescales. The number of fixed-term exclusions of children and young people with SEND has also been significantly reduced.
- Children and young people with SEND achieve positive educational outcomes. A high proportion of them remain in education, training and employment and a high proportion also go on to achieve paid employment. Attendance rates for children and young people with SEND are very positive and fixed-term exclusions have reduced dramatically.

Areas for improvement:

The local area is required to produce and submit a Written Statement of Action to Ofsted that explains how the local area will tackle the following areas of significant weakness:

- The waiting times for ASD assessments, and weaknesses in the support for children and young people awaiting assessment and following diagnosis of ASD;
- The fractured relationships with parents and carers and lack of clear communication and co-production at a strategic level;

- The incorrect placement of some children and young people with EHC plans in specialist settings, and mainstream school leaders' understanding of why this needs to be addressed;
- The lack of uptake of staff training for mainstream primary and secondary school staff to help them understand and meet the needs of children and young people with SEND; and
- The quality of the online local offer.

Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS)

Inspection took place between 15 November and 3 December 2021, and the judgement was published on 1st February 2022. The full report can be found here: <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/80576>

Key findings and Ofsted ratings

- The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families - Good
- The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection - Good
- The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers - Good
- Overall effectiveness - Good

Areas of best practice identified

Summary of strengths: Within the report the inspectors highlighted the service improvement journey since 2017 and the role leaders have played in working with partners and children and young people to support development. The report noted that Social Workers listen to the views of children and ensure they are involved in decisions that impact them and highlighted how the service builds trusting relationships with children, young people and families to ensure families stay together where possible (including when children come into care placing them with their wider family if appropriate). The report found that children in care are supported to live stable lives and make good progress and that care experienced young people are supported when they leave care with opportunities to strengthen their independence

HMICFRS Inspection

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service Inspected Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service in the Spring of 2021. This was an 8-week virtual inspection. A significant programme of work is ongoing to address the points raised in the inspection report ahead of HMIFRCS conducting their follow-up reinspection.

Key findings / conclusions

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service was issued with 3 Causes of Concern and 41 Areas for Improvement against the three inspection areas of Efficiency, Effectiveness and People.

Areas of best practice identified

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service was deemed as being effective at responding to major incidents and emergencies.

Independent Inquiry Child Sexual Abuse: Child Sexual Exploitation by Organised Networks

On 6 March 2019 the Independent Inquiry Child Sexual Abuse (the 'IICSA') published an Update Note in relation to their investigation into Child Sexual Exploitation by Organised Networks ('CSEON'). In that note the IICSA identified its intention to consider 6 geographical areas through which it would explore its eight identified themes. Warwickshire was one of the geographical areas. The report was published on 1st February 2022.

The Council was pleased to be chosen as a case study area for this inquiry. We were able to share elements of our practice to support national improvements which will help protect children across the country. We recognise the bravery of all the victims who have taken part in this inquiry. Sharing their experience will help improve the support offered to other victims of abuse.

As an organisation we are focused on learning and improvement and are pleased to see this noted in the report which highlights our progressive approach to risk-assessment, our well-established audit and review processes, our empathy for victims and our strong partnership approach to raise awareness about, identify and tackle child sexual exploitation.

We recognise the issues young people face in accessing mental health support as identified in the report and acknowledge shortcomings around a case in 2017. We have made significant changes to our practice since this time.

In addition to our direct work with children and families, our multi-agency partnership allows us to share information and learning and to work together to do everything we can to continue to confront this issue to keep young people safe. Our work in this area has been recognised in an Ofsted report, also published today, which found that 'children who are at high risk of exploitation are identified well and supported to enable risks to reduce'.

We will not be complacent in our work and our awareness raising. We will consider the findings of the report carefully and continue to pay them attention so that they are embedded as improvements to our practice.

In addition to our powerful 'Something's not Right' campaign we will continue to work with regional and national partners to ensure our approach has greatest impact on our communities and further afield.

4 Review of effectiveness and improvements to governance arrangements

We have responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of our governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of managers within the Authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment and by the Head of Internal Audit's annual report.

The review of effectiveness was co-ordinated by an evaluation panel consisting of representatives from Legal, Finance and each Directorate (Resources, Communities and People), Internal Audit and chaired by the Strategy & Commissioning Manager (Treasury, Pensions, Audit, Insurance and Risk). In carrying out its review, the evaluation panel:

- considered the approach of the Authority to establishing its principal statutory obligations and organisational objectives;
- considered the approach of the Authority to identifying principal risks to the achievement of those obligations and objectives;
- identified the key control frameworks that the Authority has in place to manage its principal risks;
- obtained assurance from managers on the operation of key control frameworks and on the results of relevant external or internal inspections;
- reviewed progress against the 2021-22 Governance Action Plan (Appendix 1); and
- evaluated the assurances provided and identified any gaps.

The evaluation panel also considered the strategic risks updated and agreed with Corporate Board in January 2022.

In addition, Assistant Directors have confirmed that they have complied with the risk management framework throughout the year and have provided assurances at year end.

Consideration was also given to the results of reviews carried out by external regulators and agencies during the year including the external audit of the accounts. The work of the evaluation panel was scrutinised by the Assistant Director Governance and Policy (Monitoring Officer), the Assistant Director Finance (Deputy Section 151 Officer), Strategic Director for Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Strategic Director for People before being submitted to the Audit and Standards Committee in May 2022 for further scrutiny.

The results of Internal Audit work were reported to the Audit and Standards Committee throughout the year. The individual reviews feed into the overall Internal Audit Annual Report. The Committee has also considered in greater detail areas where limited assurance opinions have been provided including Supported Accommodation (16–17-year-olds). This report concludes that the Authority's control environment provides substantial assurance that the significant risks facing the Authority are addressed. The internal audit findings, including those with a limited assurance opinion, were duly considered in the preparation of this statement.

The 2021-22 Governance Action Plan (Appendix 1) presents, on an exception basis, additional actions that are already planned or being considered to inform future Council planning and strengthen governance.

The process of review has also captured governance improvements in Table 2, that we have made during the year.

Table2: Summary of improvements to governance arrangements in 2021-22

Activities and Assurances	Governance Principle (s)
<p>Led by the Resources Directorate, including cross cutting actions</p>	
<p>An independent review of scrutiny arrangements was undertaken, with conclusions and recommendations considered by the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees in February, March and June 2021, and the final recommendations endorsed by Cabinet and approved by Council in September 2021.</p>	<p>Transparency and effective accountability</p>
<p>Continued LEXCEL accreditation of Legal Services provided ongoing assurance about the standards of legal services provided to internal and external clients. Accreditation was received in August 2021 and included feedback 'As a business and a team everyone has pulled together, enabling maintenance of your high professional standards and the delivery of an excellent service to clients.'</p>	
<p>Risk management is an integral part of good management and corporate governance and is therefore at the heart of what we do. Improvements to our risk management and performance monitoring processes have been identified and incorporated into our new integrated delivery plan approach.</p>	<p>Risk and Performance</p>
<p>Our new council plan will be supported by a single integrated delivery programme which we will refresh each year on a rolling basis, alongside the annual Medium Term Financial Strategy. We will publish the delivery plan and progress updates on a quarterly basis. We have reviewed all our key business frameworks to ensure they support delivery of our Council Plan.</p>	<p>Determining interventions</p>
<p>Corporate Policy Team conducted an assessment of current strategies for the new Council Plan and produced a new Strategy Framework. The framework covers recommendations on the critical aspects such as: Guide for Strategies, delivery plans/links to business plans, performance measures, monitoring & reporting and the governance/review of strategies.</p>	<p>Defining outcomes</p>
<p>Pension Fund Administration compliance and efficiency improvements have been achieved through implementation of the I-Connect system. This has resulted in improved data quality and a reduced number of pension regulation breaches.</p>	<p>Transparency and effective accountability</p>

Activities and Assurances	Governance Principle (s)
<p>Cabinet continues to be informed of the activity of the Warwickshire Property and Development Group. The Council has now appointed the non-executive Chair of the Group and Board Members.</p>	<p>Strong public financial management / internal control</p>
<p>The Finance Training Board continue to invite finance staff to undertake professional training including for example, CIPFA, AAT, and other specialist qualifications in areas such as pensions administration, welfare benefits and tax.</p>	<p>Strong public financial management/ Building capacity and capability</p>
<p>Our strategic Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) agenda is guided by Corporate Board and the Council's EDI group will ensure this agenda is translated into practice. The Council EDI group is chaired by the Strategy and Commissioning Manager for Human Resources and Organisational Development (HR&OD) and is comprised of diverse employees from across the Council, advised by the EDI team.</p>	<p>Ethical Values/ building capacity and capability</p>
<p>The introduction of an Anti-Money Laundering Policy to support the expansion of the Council's activities into non-treasury investments.</p>	<p>Ethical Values/ building capacity and capability</p>
<p>The wellbeing of our people has continued to have a strong focus throughout the year. Unsurprisingly we have seen a slight increase in our sickness absence rates, as we have returned to more normal working arrangements and social distancing measures have been lifted, however, we have remained within our target range. We have continued to check in with our people in terms of their wellbeing and have found that around 80% of our people have been doing ok and 83% of our people saying that wellbeing is promoted at work. With our new approach to engagement, we will be reporting a new wellbeing measure next year.</p>	<p>Building capacity and capability/ Engagement</p>
<p>Led by the Communities Directorate – service specific</p>	
<p>Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service inspected Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service in the Spring of 2021. Following this inspection and the subsequent report, the WFRS improvement plan has been reviewed to incorporate actions needed as a result of the inspection. This is now being monitored and updated on a regular basis and a recent internal audit has given substantial assurance over the adequacy and effectiveness of the Action Plan.</p>	<p>Managing risk and performance</p>

Activities and Assurances	Governance Principle (s)
<p>The investment funds in respect of the WPDG and WRIF are both governed by arrangements approved directly by Members, and a Member Oversight Group has been established to provide additional scrutiny and support to these initiatives. Investments are controlled by policies including limits on the amount that can be invested each financial year, which are set out in the Council's Investment Strategy which is approved by Council.</p>	<p>Managing risk and performance</p>
<p>The new Council Plan reaffirms our commitment to adapt to and mitigate climate change and meet net zero requirements.</p>	<p>Defining outcomes</p>
<p>The Warwickshire Minerals Plan has been subjected to independent examination and the Inspector's report is awaited. When adopted, the Plan will set out policies and allocate sites to guide minerals extraction in support of sustainable development until 2032.</p>	<p>Defining outcomes</p>
<p>Led by the People Directorate – service specific</p>	
<p>We launched the Children and Young People Strategy 2021 - 2030 which has the Child Friendly Warwickshire programme at its heart. Approved by Cabinet in October 2021, the Strategy outlines the council's commitment to ensuring children and young people have a voice and are supported to be the best they can be. The strategy's goals and ambitions were shaped by feedback from a survey completed by over a thousand young people across Warwickshire and will be the council's approach to working with partners, families and communities between now and 2030 to help youngsters reach their potential.</p>	<p>Defining outcomes</p>
<p>We continue to work with our partners to deliver an integrated health and social care system and a presentation to the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 10th February 2022. The presentation by Danielle Oum (Chair) and Phil Johns (Chef Executive Designate) of the Warwickshire Integrated Care System (ICS) included the next steps for health and social care in Coventry and Warwickshire.</p>	<p>Managing risk and performance</p>
<p>On 15th March 2022, Council considered the latest proposal on Children's Services Residential provision. The Council approved additional funding to deliver phase two of the Internal Children's Homes Project.</p>	<p>Defining outcomes</p> <p>Managing risk and performance</p>

Activities and Assurances	Governance Principle (s)
<p>On 1st December 2021, the Government published People at the Heart of Care: adult social care reform white paper which sets out a 10-year vision for adult social care and provides information on funded proposals to be implemented over the next three years.</p> <p>Following the joint local area SEND inspection in Warwickshire - Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools determined that a Written Statement of Action was required because of significant areas of weakness in the area's practice. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector also determined that the local authority and the area's clinical commissioning group are responsible for submitting the written statement to Ofsted. This written statement was submitted on 24th December 2021 by SEND and inclusion services on behalf of the Strategic Director (People).</p>	<p>Managing risk and performance</p>

5 Governance issues and challenges

We have not experienced any significant governance failures during the last year and our arrangements remain fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework.

A primary purpose of the governance framework is to manage strategic risks proactively and to ensure that risks that cannot be tolerated are appropriately mitigated.

The areas of challenge listed below have been identified as major challenges for the Council (strategic risks assessed as having the highest risk scores – residual risk score greater than 12) as reported to Corporate Board in January 2022. We are satisfied that the challenges identified here are addressed by the Council Plan/Covid-19 Recovery Plan and supporting strategies, with key mitigation strategies signposted below.

Risk of Post Pandemic widening of social and health inequalities and inability to catch up, compounded by challenges in healthcare catch up, increased waiting lists for treatments and the emergence of long covid, resulting in worsening outcomes for our communities.

We have had focused campaigns and public comms to support County vaccination and booster programme. The Public Health Covid Containment and Outbreak Control Plan are well tested and effective. Our Health & Well Being Strategy has a focus on tackling inequality.

People Strategy & Commissioning Plans 2020-22 – Health, Well Being and Self Care, Integrated and Targeted Support. ICS - WCC influence in the design and implementation of new care systems to optimise outcomes for Community Health & Well Being.

Risk of continued and increasing levels of disruption to care markets and impacts on the supply of core provision and costs pressures from inflation, demand and legislative changes.

Our Integrated Commissioning approach provides some flexibility to respond to pressure points; Market viability framework; market intelligence and engagement will inform market analysis and future plans to address pressures (fee levels, provider support).

Risk of not achieving County net zero by 2050, biodiversity and climate adaptation targets, if unable to mobilise Warwickshire businesses, residents, communities and other key partners (e.g., council's developers) where there are critical dependencies.

We have placed a spotlight on WCC led climate change action via a dedicated website, open communication channels and community engagement opportunities.

A Warwickshire and Coventry climate change conference was held in March 2022, bringing people together from public, private and community organisations to combat climate change. We have commissioned work on sustainable futures 2050 costed action plan for delivery later in 2022.

A “Green Shoots Community Climate Change Fund” was introduced in 2021 to provide local funding to increase resilience to and reduce the impact of climate change.

Risk our SEND and Inclusion ambitions are not delivered to improve outcomes for children and young people. Insufficient resources to match the increasing demand for SEND provision and not achieving critical improvements highlighted by the recent Ofsted inspection

SEND & Inclusion Change Programme Board monitor key action delivery and post Ofsted action commitments. MTFS – indicators of increasing demand, DSG overspends and trajectory of increasing spend factored in to budget proposals

Risk of continued uncertainty about key policy, economy and funding forecasts; impacting on financial planning assumptions and our ability to address the ongoing structural gap in available resources and reduced tax revenues, leaving WCC with insufficient resources to deliver Council Plan priorities and respond effectively to unplanned events

Our MTFS update process includes scenario planning and sensitivity analysis of assumptions. Shorter-term volatility is managed through reserves and availability of unallocated funds.

An Integrated Planning approach allows refreshed Council priorities to inform resource planning and allocation decisions, including scaling back or withdrawing from activity.

Risk of negative results (financial and social) from our commercial and investment activities.

The Council has a Commercial Strategy with Commercial Delivery Group oversight, and the Commercial Team supports traded services. WRIF and WPDG investment is guided by approved investment strategies, governance and regulatory compliance arrangements, and oversight and assurance on managing financial risk.

Risks identified by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

The report from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) published on 1st February 2022 was welcomed by the Council. We note the findings and welcome the positive comments made; however, we will not be complacent in our work and our awareness raising. We will consider the findings of the report carefully and look to embed them in order to continue to make improvements to our practice.

In addition to our powerful ‘Something’s not Right’ campaign we will continue to work with regional and national partners to ensure our approach has greatest impact on our communities and further afield.

Recruitment and Retention

As with many organisations, we are experiencing challenges in recruitment and retention which has been heightened by the pandemic. The Quarter 3 strategic risk update considered by Corporate Board in January noted this and it is recognised as an increasing risk for the Council. At the January review, staff retention (and staff absences) was still on target but being closely monitored.

We will continue to monitor, and act based on our People Strategy supported by the How We Work programme with Delivery Group oversight.

6 Certification

We will continue to manage the risks detailed above and further enhance our governance arrangements over the coming year as set out in the 2022-23 Governance Action Plan at Appendix 1. We are satisfied that the risks we have identified are addressed in our Council Plan, Medium Term Financial Strategy and other key strategies. We are satisfied that the actions identified will address the improvements that were highlighted in our review of effectiveness. These are monitored and reported to members and Corporate Board as part of the corporate performance management framework. We will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.



.....
Councillor Izzi Seccombe OBE
Leader of the Council



.....
Monica Fogarty
Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service

Appendix 1 – Rolling Governance Action Plan

Governance Improvement Actions for 2020-21 b/f	Actions Completed	This year we are:
<p>To implement a Three Line of Defence model as part of a council wide assurance framework to manage risks and deliver ongoing internal control assurances to Corporate Board and members throughout the year.</p>	<p>The three Lines of Defence model is instrumental in the Council’s Risk Management Framework.</p> <p>Functional Operating Models have been informed by the Three Lines model.</p>	<p>Assurance mapping will be developed as part of the system of internal control, and as part of Internal Audit planning.</p>
Governance Improvement Actions for 2021-22	Actions Completed	This year we are:
<p>How we govern our partnership arrangements:</p> <p>We will review and refresh our partnership governance arrangements, which were last updated in 2014. We will seek a risk based and proportionate approach to managing our partnerships.</p>	<p>We have spent considerable time working with stakeholders in the Health and Care sectors with a particular focus on progressing the integrated care agenda.</p>	<p>We will continue to review and refresh these and other partnership governance arrangements as the need arises. We will seek a risk based and proportionate approach to managing our partnerships.</p>
<p>How we manage our capital programme activity</p> <p>We will complete an end-to-end process review of our approach to capital project management with the aim of reducing the likelihood of significant budget overspends and impactful delays.</p>	<p>Process review completed and recommendations made to Change Portfolio Board – approved March 2022.</p>	<p>Phase 2 of the project – implementation will commence.</p> <p>Some elements will be implemented early in the year, others such as systems development are likely to take longer.</p>

<p>How we manage our third-party suppliers and contracts</p> <p>We will take forward actions identified from a review of Supplier Management by PwC. This includes establishing a Contract Management and Procurement Delivery Group, implementing a new Contract Management System, and setting up cross directorate boards to oversee supplier relationships that hold the greatest risk (i.e., those where a supplier failure would risk delivery at a Council wide level).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement and Contract Management Board (previously Delivery Group) has been set up and meets regularly. It is currently chaired by a Strategic Director with Assistant Directors representing CSU, Finance and each directorate. It is governed by a Terms of Reference (ToR) which ensures it remains focussed on the relevant issues. • Cross directorate working groups for high-risk contracts. So far there is only one Supplier which meets the criteria for requiring this level of monitoring. Draft ToR have been written and work is about to commence to identify the relevant membership. Work has already happened with this supplier to increase the cross directorate working to ensure quality, delivery and to manage risks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About to commence soft market testing for a Supplier Management Tool – with the objective of beginning full procurement in the Autumn. • A procurement pipeline is currently under development which will further help ensure a structured strategic approach is taken across procurement, contract management and quality assurance.
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Governance Improvement Actions 2022-23	Action Owner	By when?
<p>HMICFRS Action Plan – the actions from the Action Plan have been transferred into delivery and team plans following the HMICFRS inspection. A new WFRS Delivery Plan 2022-24 has been developed and will be used to monitor progress against the HMICFRS causes of concern to ensure that agreed actions are implemented.</p>	Ben Brook	March 2023
<p>Joint local area SEND inspection in Warwickshire - Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools determined that a Written Statement of Action is required because of significant areas of weakness in the area's practice. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector also determined that the local</p>	Nigel Minns	December 2022

<p>authority and the area's clinical commissioning group were responsible for submitting the written statement to Ofsted. Our response was submitted on 24th December 2021 on behalf of the Strategic Director (People). Following this, Warwickshire has been selected as one of the local areas across the UK to take part in a pilot to support Ofsted and CQC to develop a new area SEND inspection framework. Learning on the inspection methodology and key themes will be shared as we go through the pilot, but there will be no final report or judgement as this is not an inspection of Warwickshire. However, any learning to help us to improve the delivery of our services will feed into our Written Statement of Action programme of work.</p>		
<p>Review of code of corporate governance against new Council Plan</p>	<p>Gereint Stoneman / Sarah Duxbury</p>	<p>December 2022</p>
<p>Undertake a governance health check using the Centre for Governance & Scrutiny Governance, Risk and Resilience Framework</p>	<p>Sarah Cowen / Sioned Harper</p>	<p>December 2022</p>
<p>Undertake a review of our officer delegations to ensure up to date following organisational changes</p>	<p>Nichola Vine</p>	<p>December 2022</p>
<p>Undertake a wide-ranging commissioning / governance review to refine our Target Operating Model. This will include a review of the governance of projects and programmes to align it with commissioning activity, and will include additional reviews, led by Governance and Policy for organisational-level governance, and Finance for monitoring of capital programmes. In line with the Council's new Delivery and Performance Plans, the review will continue throughout 2022/23 and will provide recommendations on governance to Corporate Board in Q2.</p>	<p>Craig Cusack / Sarah Duxbury / Andy Felton</p>	<p>September 2022</p>
<p>Develop an action plan to address issues arising from the Local Government Corporate Peer Challenge which took place in March 2022. The report will be published in June 2022.</p>	<p>Sarah Duxbury</p>	<p>March 2023</p>

<p>Producing, with public sector, business and voluntary sector partners and Government, a costed plan and trajectory for the County to be net zero no later than 2050, that is clear with Government about resources and support necessary to deliver national and local aspirations on net zero.</p>	<p>Steve Smith</p>	<p>September 2022</p>
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