

Warwickshire County Council

Annual Governance Statement 2024/25 –

Produced for year ended 31 March 2025

(Draft for Publication with Statement of Accounts –
June 25)



Executive Summary and Certification

Welcome to our Annual Governance Statement for 2024/25.

Our ambition at Warwickshire County Council 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, prosper and grow older.

This Council recognises the importance of having a solid foundation of good governance and sound financial management and are we are committed further enhancing our governance arrangements to enable delivery of our Council Plan.

Our Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is a critical part of our wider governance arrangements, giving assurance of the way we meet the highest standards required of public office. The Statement sits alongside our Council Plan 2022-27, Council Delivery Plan (CDP), Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and related key strategies and frameworks, covering risk, performance, governance and service delivery.

Our approach follows the current guidance and best practice described in the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice: Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2016), and related CIPFA briefings.

This Statement gives assurances and examples to demonstrate our compliance with the principles of good governance for the year ending 31st March 2025. It goes on to set out and Action Plan to be delivered in 2025/26 that will be reviewed in the following year's AGS with progress monitored and reported to Members and senior officers who will continue to monitor implementation and operation as part of our commitment to good governance and high-quality public services.

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1. Our approach

The production of our Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is a well-established and respected process which involves officers from across a wide range of services and key functions.

As a Council, 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)*. In line with this commitment the Council has a responsibility to conduct an annual review of the effectiveness of our governance framework.

Our annual review of the effectiveness of our governance framework is informed by three lines of defence:

- Directors and managers who provide assurance on performance, service delivery, risk management and compliance with the seven principles of good governance within their services.
- Review by those services who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, including for finance, risk, human resources, legal and information technology;
- Independent oversight provided through our internal audit team, external auditors, other inspections, and independent reviews.

This year's statement has been produced with engagement from across the Council including:

- **Head of Service Reference Group** - comprising Corporate Policy, Risk Management, Legal and Governance Services, Business Intelligence, Change Programmes, Internal Audit, Finance, Commercial and Procurement.
- **Coordination Group** – co-ordinating the update of the statement and sourcing evidence from across the Council.
- **Directorate Representatives** - Director level representatives from each Directorate and allocated lead directors for each of the principles within the assurance statements below.
- **Director Assurance Statements** – Signed by each Director to provide assurance of known risks and controls within every Service, including the operation of key control frameworks and responses to external inspection.
- **Statutory Officers** – Oversight meetings with the Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer.
- **Audit and Inspection Review** – A review of the findings of all relevant audit and external inspections has informed the content of the statement.

Subsequently, the final version of the Statement will be considered and approved by the following bodies (and available for review by the public in draft) ahead of being submitted as part of the Statement of Accounts currently scheduled for approval by full Council in December 2025:

- Directorate Leadership Teams;
- Corporate Board;
- Audit and Standards Committee;
- Cabinet

Together these groups consider the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements in relation to meeting its principal statutory obligations, organisational objectives and performance management targets, alongside the identification and control of any risk to the achievement of these. This approach has ensured that the development process, content, and findings of our AGS are both coproduced and owned by all necessary stakeholders.

Our governance action plan for 2025/26 is informed by known and anticipated challenges for the coming financial year, alongside any remedial action.

2. The Annual Governance Statement in context

As a Council, 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 (the “best value duty”).

The AGS forms a key part of our governance framework. As such, it both supports and is informed by the following key Council documents:

- **Council Plan 2022-27** – Setting out our strategic priorities and areas of focus which will direct the focus of our work over the next five years to achieve the Council's vision to make Warwickshire the best it can be and deliver our three strategic priorities.
- **Medium Term Financial Strategy** - The Council sets its annual budget in conjunction with a 5-year Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) aligned to the Council Plan. This rolling approach to resourcing the Council's activities and services allows financial support for longer-term issues and objectives to be considered at the same time as balancing funding with the immediate budget pressures and delivery requirements.
- **Council Delivery Plan 2025-27** - Setting out what we will deliver to achieve our Council Plan objectives over a two- year rolling programme. The [latest version](#) was approved by Cabinet in March 2025.
- **Wider Business Frameworks** – Setting out the Council's approach to risk, performance management, business planning, financial management, engagement, and strategy.
- **Council Strategies** – A suite of strategies which support the Council Plan and cover the full range of Council services. These are split into a set of core strategies that directly relate to the Areas of Focus in the Council Plan, such as Health & Wellbeing, Economic Growth, Education and several supporting strategies which complement the core strategies.
- **Council Operational Policies** – These policies are developed and managed at an operational service level and set out the practical approach to delivering service outcomes.
- **Audit Programme** – A risk-based and objective programme of internal audits that provide assurance, advice, and insight both as part of an annually updated audit plan

and through proactive consultancy and advisory work on significant projects, procurements, and initiatives. The annual Internal Audit Programme is endorsed by the Audit and Standards Committee which also receives the results of all Internal Audit and External Audit reports. These feed into the Annual Audit Report considered by the Committee.

- **External inspection** – All external inspections within the timeframe of the AGS are considered and inform proposals for subsequent improvement activity.

Together these elements provide the operating content for our Governance Framework and the context for our AGS.

3. Our Governance framework

To meet our statutory responsibilities as a public body, we have put in place effective governance arrangements for overseeing what we do. We have adopted a Code of Corporate Governance that sets out the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework Delivering Good Governance in Local Government.

These arrangements are intended to make sure that we do the right things for our communities, in the right way, in a timely, open and accountable manner. They 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 support our communities.

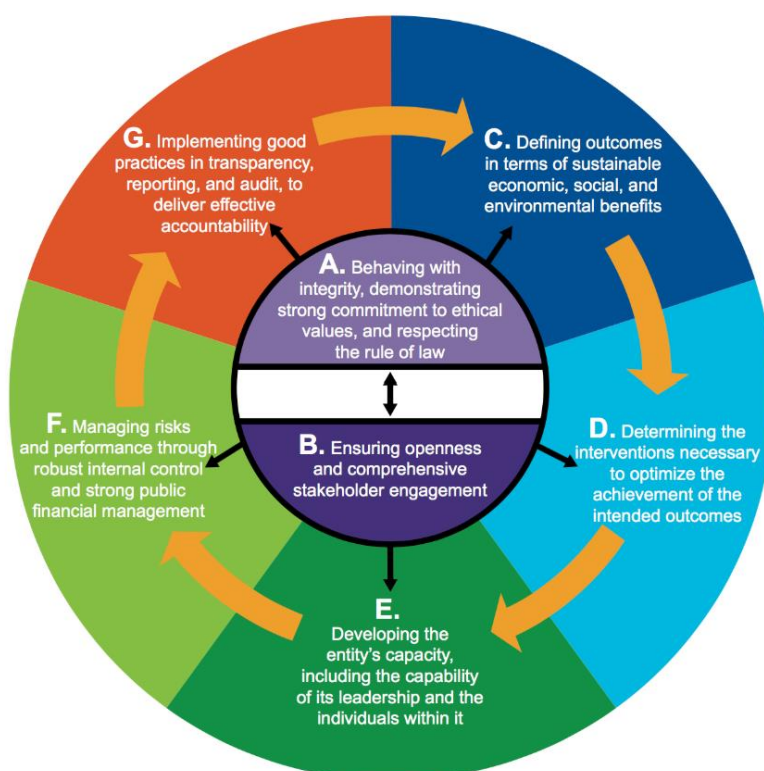


Figure 1: CIPFA's Principles of Good Governance

The Council's Code of Corporate Governance was updated and approved by Cabinet in 2021 and will be reviewed at least every 4 years, with the next review in 2025. The full details of our current code and how we meet the seven Principles of Good Governance of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government* can be found on our website here: <http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/corporategovernance> and are therefore not repeated in this document.

The AGS provides assurances that we are adhering to these principles and our processes are working in practice and help deliver our Council Plan priorities, including our supporting priority of being a great Council and partner.

We monitor external factors for their impact on the Council's governance arrangements and adapt our risk and management arrangements as appropriate. OBJ

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 as part of the AGS process.

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

The annual refresh of the CIPFA Financial Management Code Self-Assessment was reported to the Audit and Standards Committee in March 2024 and refreshed again in Spring 2025, being presented to Audit and Standards Committee at its meeting of 20 March 2025

As in previous years, this provided assurance that the Council meets the standards set out in the Financial Management Code and therefore any developments are from an on-going process of continuous improvement. The Committee also considered progress on the delivery of the Code's improvement action plan.

Given that the Council has assessed itself as compliant with the Code, the improvement action plan is focussed on continuing to push for best practice in relevant areas, rather than simply settling for basic compliance.

The assessment against the Financial Management Code is a partner document to the External Auditor's Value for Money assessment, reported as part of the 2023/24 Annual Audit Letter to the Committee on 28 November 2024. The Auditor's assessment rated the Council as "green" in all three categories of financial sustainability, governance, and improving economy, efficiency, and effectiveness. The self-assessment is consistent with these ratings given the evidence of positive action being taken proactively where opportunities to improve performance are identified.

We are alert to ensuring our governance arrangements support the Council 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.

4. Key challenges, changes, and achievements in 2024/25

The Council continues to respond and operate in a changing environment, which in 2024/25 has included amendments to government policy and funding challenges, alongside locally led changes and improvements.

The most significant areas of challenge have included funding pressures in the areas of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Inclusion services, home to school transport provision, an increased need for school places and the provision of Adults and Children's Social Care services.

During this AGS period, we have responded to the Government request to develop proposals for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Warwickshire and continued to implement the Level 2 Devolution Deal for Warwickshire secured in March 2024. This includes the transfer of three key sets of functions and funds:

- responsibility for allocating the Adult Skills Fund, delivering 19+ further education and skills provision from August 2026 onwards;
- planning and delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund from April 2025 onwards; and
- devolution of Homes England compulsory land assembly/purchase powers to be concurrently held with and exercisable by Homes England.

Economic development continues to be a priority, and significant results include securing significant investment at the Coventry and Warwick Gigapark site at Coventry Airport which forms part of a wider Investment Zone and will help small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) break into new supply chains and create new jobs.

During this AGS period, we have updated and approved several strategies, including Economic Growth, Education, SEND and Inclusion, Education Sufficiency, Adult Social Care, Safe Accommodation, Health Protection, Serious Violence Prevention, Living Well with Dementia, and Treasury Management. All strategies are available on the Council website.

We have also continued to innovate in service delivery with the introduction and implementation of the Resourcing to Risk operating model for delivery of the Fire and Rescue Service, targeted at ensuring the right coverage in the right places at the right times and based on clear risk parameters to keep our residents and businesses safe. There has also been investment in a new Hot Fire Training Facility to provide our firefighters with realistic training.

Our commitment to good governance and best practice also saw us chosen to take part in the early adoption of the Government's Families First for Children initiative as a "Pathfinder Authority". This initiative forms part of the Government's children's social care implementation strategy and responds to recommendations across several national reviews into children's social care and safeguarding. This sees us remodelling our Children and Families services into a multi-agency delivery model, to drive innovation and best practice and deliver for those needing our support.

Governance improvements within this period have included an update of our Performance Management Framework to ensure we are measuring the right things to fully understand performance and drive improvements, and the update of our Risk Management frameworks looking at the Council's appetite for risk, and ensuring our strategic approach remains solid. We have also reviewed and refreshed our change function, updated our Council Delivery Plan, and relaunched the SEND and Inclusion Partnership Board which includes a range of stakeholders.

During this period and despite national and international challenges, the Council has continued to promote improvement and strong service delivery in general across the organisation. Key achievements in 2024/25 have included:

- Implementing the Families First for Children changes including new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, expanding family networks, new multi-agency children protection and new multi-agency locality Family Help Teams.
- Completing the registration of three further Council-owned children's homes, making a total of five, providing a caring and supportive home in Warwickshire for 15 children in care. All our existing homes have been inspected by Ofsted and have been graded as "good" in all areas.
- Reaffirming our commitment to our armed forces community by re-signing the Armed Forces Covenant.
- Welcoming 1,049,490 visitors to [our Warwickshire's Country Parks](#), because of our continued work to improve access and offer a greater range of activities for our communities.
- Our Fire and Rescue services continue to deliver vital services to our communities, having attended 4426 emergency incidents and delivered 1740 Safe and Well checks to vulnerable Warwickshire people during the year.
- £6.5 million of investment was secured by Warwickshire businesses as a direct result of the Council's business support activities.
- Achieving all our Social Care & Health Commissioning intentions during 2024/25, including the procurement of domiciliary care, advocacy provision, supported living, day opportunities and respite provision for people with learning disabilities and autism, completion, and publication of the Adult Social Care Strategy.
- Continuing to quality assure all our social care and health commissioned provision, to ensure the services supplied to our local people are safe and of high quality.
- Delivering 9 education capital projects for September 2024 and providing 1628 more school places in the County. This included 1 new primary school, Myton Gardens in Warwick, making a total of 12 new schools that have opened in the County since 2010. Two secondary schools (in Warwick and Bedworth) and four primary SEND resourced provisions were also completed and opened for use, which are part of our continued commitment to establishing more SEND provision for the County.
- New government funded childcare entitlements were successfully introduced in Warwickshire, with children aged 2 and above, in working families accessing 15 hours from April 2024 and children 9 months plus, from September 2024. Current take-up for the latter cohort is 90%, (slightly above national/regional average).
- We have maintained Warwickshire's position of being amongst the highest performing areas in England for the proportion of young people aged 16-17 progressing into post 16 destinations.
- Allocating £2.5 million through our Social Fabric Fund initiative to local community organisations to help deliver local projects.

- Our Library services were designated as a National Portfolio Organisation by the Arts Council, and we rolled out automatic, universal library membership to all newborn babies.
- Securing several externally accredited awards for our services including libraries, workforce, our Elective Home Education Team, finance, carbon literacy and the Warwickshire Property Company.

5. Compliance with the seven principles of governance

The following pages set out our self-assessment of compliance against the seven principles of governance set out in our Corporate Code of Governance as adopted in our Governance Framework for 2024/25. These principles are supported across the Leadership team, and the table sets out the evidence of compliance along with an explanation.

The principles are:

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

Hyperlinks are provided and the evidence sources are also collated in the Evidence Bank summarised in **Appendix 1**.

Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law	
Compliance Overview	<p>The key policies, procedures and practices set out in the Code of Corporate Governance remained in place and were applied throughout the year. Our values and behaviours underpin our governance arrangements and are at the heart of all we do and our performance management.</p> <p>The Council's constitution continues to be the key document evidencing how decisions are made and delegated and has been reviewed and updated where required for any changes to legislation during the past year.</p>
Equality Duty	<p>We continue to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty and our obligations more generally under the Equality Act 2010. We do not accept unlawful discrimination in the provision of services whether delivered by us or commissioned externally. Equality Impact Assessments have continued to be produced to inform all appropriate decisions during the financial year.</p>
Whistle blowing	<p>Integrity is incorporated into the Council's behaviours, which are</p>

Register of interests Counter fraud	clearly defined and accessible to all staff on the intranet. To ensure the Council's values and behaviours are upheld we have codes of conduct for officers and Councillors (aligned with the Nolan Principles), registers of gifts and hospitality, registers of financial interests , and policies on counter-fraud, anti-money laundering (updated with training provided in 2024) and whistleblowing (updated in November 2023).
Member (Councillor) Code of Conduct	We keep the Council's Member Code of Conduct under review following its approval at Council in July 2021. We have undertaken several refresher training sessions for Councillors on conduct and behaviours, and these have become part of the annual cycle of member development. As part of those sessions, we consider any developments in law or guidance on conduct and update members. We have responded to the Government consultation on changes to the Standards Regime (December 2024) and if there are any changes arising from that consultation, these will form the basis of a further formal review of the Code
Member (Councillors) induction programme	<p>A formal induction programme for Councillors is undertaken following each quadrennial election. The programme has been refreshed and updated for the May 2025 induction and includes the legal principles governing decision making, the Code of Conduct, and the Council's culture and values. The programme also incorporates commercial awareness to ensure that Councillors understand their responsibilities in relation to governance of commercial activity and an introduction to the specific governance around the Council's companies. This provides Councillors with a fully rounded view of how the Council operates in the commercial area.</p> <p>Induction and training for Councillors also covers a broader understanding of Council finances and governance, including the role of scrutiny, the key Committee and Officer roles responsible for governing our finances and the wider responsibilities of the Council in terms of the services it provides. This is supplemented by on-going training for key areas like finance, conduct, major initiatives or areas of service provision, changes in the law or guidance that may arise, working with stakeholders and committee specific training.</p>
Member (Councillor) development programme including Induction (general)	<p>We aim, in our development programme, to cover a broad range of training relevant to the services provided by the Council. Some of these are repeated regularly (such as complaints and Code of Conduct training) and where issues or specific requirements are identified (including by request of members) additional sessions are delivered.</p> <p>During 2024/25, this included key sessions on the Code of Conduct, Corporate Parenting and working with health services, alongside focussed sessions on key priorities and on specific service delivery. These included sessions on knife crime, child exploitation, Children and Family centres, Community Powered Warwickshire, the Care Act, extreme weather events and flooding, highways infrastructure, mental health and wellbeing, school attendance, suicide prevention and rights of way.</p> <p>Following a Council motion, a series of training sessions related to SEND awareness were co-produced with groups representing the</p>

SEND training (2024)	<p>parents and carers of children with SEND needs. These were delivered to all Councillors, and the topic now forms part of mandatory annual learning.</p>
Member (Councillor) development – specialist sessions	<p>Additional training is also required for Councillors who sit on specific committees. Before sitting on Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Corporate Parenting Panel and Adoption Panel, Councillors must have completed the SEND training.</p> <p>Specific training is required for those who sit on Regulatory Committee, and ongoing knowledge sessions also take place in advance of the committee meetings to ensure that knowledge remains current. Bespoke training has been provided for participants of the Police & Crime Panel and new Independent Members appointed to the Audit and Standards Committee. Bespoke training has also been conducted for those sitting on the Pension Fund Investment Sub-Committee and the Local Pension Board who have access to learning portals provided by the Council's actuary.</p> <p>All Councillors are regularly advised of external sessions from groups such as Local Government Association, Information Commissioner's Office, Warwickshire Police, and others that are relevant to them. This has included training around personal safety (online and in person) and local government finance.</p>
Complaints policy	<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 and are responded to as quickly as possible (http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/complaints). This policy was reviewed and updated in February 2024 and considered recommendations arising from the then draft Complaint Handling Code issued by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). A further refresh is underway, following confirmation of the LGSCO Code, to ensure that the Council's approach remains aligned to that set out in the Code.</p> <p>When complaints are received about councillors, these are investigated under our Member Code of Conduct procedures.</p>
Constitution and Decision-making framework	<p>The Constitution sets out the decision-making framework for the Council to ensure that all officers, key post holders and Councillors can fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative requirements. All our reports to Council committees receive financial and legal checks prior to submission to ensure they comply with regulatory requirements.</p> <p>Our Monitoring Officer receives weekly reports to alert her to any legal issues which she shares with the Section 151 / Deputy Section 151 Officers and the Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service). The Chief Executive, Section 151 / Deputy Section 151 Officers and Monitoring Officer meet regularly to ensure any regulatory requirements are addressed and any regulatory risks are discussed and visible.</p>
Financial Regulations	<p>Our Constitution, including Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, was reviewed during 2022/23. Minor updates were made to the Constitution during the 2024/25 financial year to</p>

	<p>ensure that it remained legislatively compliant and continued to reflect the organisation's operating arrangements.</p> <p>The Constitution is being reviewed generally in terms of financial and other delegations to ensure legislative compliance and that delegations necessary to reflect changes in procedure are captured.</p>
Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations	<p>A full review of Contract Standing Orders has taken place throughout 2024 to reflect the changes to procurement legislation that came into force from February 2025 (Procurement Regulations 2024), and the earlier requirements of the Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023. Transitional arrangements apply for existing procurement activity (and contract management) and the new rules have been fully considered by a dedicated officer group to ensure that the new legislative requirements are embedded into our practice and procedures.</p> <p>Any changes to the Constitution and Contract Standing Orders are considered by the Cabinet before approval by full Council. Contract Standing Orders are also considered by Audit and Standards Committee before being considered by Cabinet.</p>
Procurement & Contract Management Strategy	<p>Officers have also reviewed the Procurement and Contract Management Strategy in light of the legislative changes. Detailed training was provided to officers at all levels of the organisation on the new legislation from varying providers including CIPFA, central Government and specialist legal firms.</p>
Cost centre management training	<p>All officers with budget responsibilities receive training on general financial management and specifics around financial policies, procedures, systems, and propriety. During 2024/25, there have been regular and strengthened sessions delivered by the Executive Director for Resources/Section 151 Officer, the Director of Finance/Deputy Section 151 Officer and the Head of Strategic Finance focussing on the responsibilities of cost centre managers and budget holders and on the processes and procedures within the Council to monitor and approve spending, including regular briefings on the wider Council financial position, the budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.</p>
Joint consultative committee and teacher trade unions	<p>The Joint Consultative Committee meets on a quarterly basis providing the opportunity for our recognised trade union representatives from UNISON, Unite the Union, and GMB, to meet with senior management and discuss issues affecting the workforce including Health & Safety. Teacher Trade Unions meet separately with the 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.</p>
Data Controller, SIRO and named Protection Officers	<p>We are registered as a data controller under the Data Protection Act as we collect, and process personal information. We have named Data Protection Officers who sit within the Information Governance team. We have General Data Protection Regulation (UK 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</p>

	<p>Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000.</p> <p>The Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) in Warwickshire is responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of the Council's Information Risk Policy, working closely with the DPO (Data Protection Officer), Monitoring Officer and Caldicott Guardian, and acting as the champion for information risk on the Leadership Team.</p> <p>The SIRO leads the Information Governance risk assessment and management processes, ensures that the Leadership Team is informed about information risk issues, and oversees the development of an effective infrastructure to support information assurance. This year, new mechanisms have been introduced to better appraise Executive Directors and the Chief Executive of information incidents.</p>
Commercial Delivery Group	<p>The Commercial Delivery Group meets at least quarterly and is chaired by the Executive Director for Resources. The Group oversees delivery of our Commercial Strategy ensuring that we optimise commercial performance, become a more commercially focused organisation and invest in new commercial opportunities that bring financial returns as well as wider economic benefits for Warwickshire. The Group seeks assurance on the Council's commercial activities and provides robust challenge.</p>
Trading Companies Warwickshire Property Development Group Warwickshire Investment Fund	<p>Trading companies, wholly or partly owned by the Council, are scrutinised and challenged through Senior Officers acting as shareholder representatives. For Warwickshire Property and Development Group, given its size and remit, performance is monitored through senior officer governance groups including the Commercial Delivery Group and the Officer Advisory Group on a quarterly basis. Each scheme is subject to stringent due diligence by the Officer Advisory Group and a senior Governance Group before being presented to Cabinet for decision making.</p> <p>Councillor involvement and assurance on company performance is provided by the Member Oversight Group with each scheme requiring Cabinet approval before it can be implemented. The Member Oversight Group also considers Warwickshire Investment Fund (WIF) activity.</p> <p>In some instances, Council officers are appointed as Directors of the Council's companies. These officers are supported by training on issues of importance including their statutory duties as Directors, conflicts of interest and any legislative developments of relevance.</p> <p>Annual General Meetings (AGMs) are held by all trading companies to allow the Council as shareholder to further review annual performance and governance. The Statutory Officers Group actively monitors the risk of potential conflicts and traded performance, with clearly articulated risk statements, monitored by legal and finance officers, designed to act as an early warning system of risks arising.</p>
Educaterers	<p>A regular meeting of the S151 Officer, the Deputy S151 Officer and of the Monitoring Officer, supported by relevant officers takes place</p>

	to enable the Council to undertake its shareholder responsibilities and to monitor the performance of the Educaterers company.
Anti Money Laundering Policy	The Council operates an anti-money laundering policy , and the Director of Finance (Deputy Section 151 Officer) is the Council's Anti-Money Laundering Responsible Officer (AMLRO). Training was provided in June 2024 for relevant officers, and the policy was reviewed and refreshed with external legal advice in September 2024.

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 Plan 22-27	Our budget is informed by the priorities set in the Council Plan 2022-27 which drew upon extensive public consultation. Additionally, we undertake an annual consultation on the budget, engaging with business rate paying representatives and trade union representatives in line with our legal requirements.
Council Meetings – Public-i	Council and Committee meetings are live streamed and available as recorded webcasts through the Council's website. Access to Information legislation is complied with and agendas and decisions are recorded and published in line with legislation. Formal meetings allow for public attendance (subject to certain exemptions), and we have a petitions scheme and a public speaking scheme that govern participation at meetings by the public. Significant decisions involve public consultations where required.
Consultation and Engagement Framework	The Council's Consultation and Engagement Framework sets out organisational objectives and standards for consultation and engagement to ensure residents' and stakeholders' voices inform strategies and policies, service change and commissioning. Guidance and resources to support the Framework are made available on the Consultation and Engagement Information Hub and a key development in 2024-25 has been a new suite of specialist tutorials and skills guides to build good practice and improve design of activities by officers.
Warwickshire Youth Council	The Warwickshire Youth Council represents the voice of young people in Warwickshire. Every two years, 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 ensuring that the voice of young people is heard across the Council. The top three themes that emerged as priorities for young people in Warwickshire are Mental Health & Wellbeing, Experience in Schools and Crime & Safety. The Youth Council is undertaking activities to raise awareness and influence changes against these themes with its services. The Youth Council also

	incorporates three members of the Youth Parliament. Examples of key achievements include allocation of grants to support four local youth organisations to deliver programmes against Youth Council priorities, production of podcasts with professionals on mental health and the members of Youth Parliament representing Warwickshire on the benches in the Palace of Westminster, in the House of Commons.
Experts by Experience	<p>Adult Social Care, have always carried out engagement, gathering people's experiences and using co-production to inform our approach but have worked to become more consistent in this over the last 18 months by making better use of the voice of people who draw on support and carers. We have worked with the Ideas Alliance and Curators of Change, and we are building on this with a co-production reference group and the creation of a dedicated post to bring additional capacity. We want to go further but this work has already made a difference with Experts by Experience prompting changes to website design and content, helping us revisit and refresh principles on how we work and positively influencing the process and enhancing the interviews for our advocacy contract.</p> <p>So far, the 'Over a Brew' sessions facilitated by Curators of Change, have been attended by more than 230 staff. Our local experts by experience have played an increasing role in leading these. They have also attended our management team where their input was really valued, and this will become a regular event. They have formed links with the regional co-production network, and we are continuing to recruit and support more Experts by Experience. It is also great to witness and to hear from them how this has made a big difference to them.</p> <p>We have relaunched our Care Champions approach within Quality Assurance with 7 Care Champions recruited and a further 3 considering joining us. The first in-person training session was held mid-April with more planned. The first provider visit is scheduled for May.</p>
Council Delivery Plan	The Council Delivery Plan (CDP) tracks the key priority actions being delivered to ensure successful implementation of the Council Plan. This 2-year rolling Delivery Plan is reviewed annually and approved by Cabinet, with the latest Plan approved in March 2025. Progress against the related deliverables in the CDP are reported quarterly to Cabinet as part of the overall performance framework.
Warwickshire Children and Young People Strategy	We continue to be guided by the Children and Young People Strategy 2021 – 2030 , Link: Warwickshire Children and Young People Strategy which has Child Friendly Warwickshire 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. 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 young people reach their potential. Throughout 2024/25, we have continued to be guided by this strategy, which has been fundamental to developing our new Families First approach reflecting

	<p>the governments new children's social care reforms. The Child Friendly Warwickshire Strategy also informs cross cutting issues in the Council including Public Health, Transport, Education Services, Skills and Employment, Libraries and Children's Social Care.</p>
<p>Corporate Parenting Children in care Council & Care Leaver Forum</p>	<p>As Corporate Parents we have high aspirations for our children in care and care experienced young people. We are committed to hearing the voice of those children through engagement with the Children in Care Council and the Care Leavers' Forum. Both forums seek to improve services for care experienced children and young people.</p> <p>Examples of key achievements include an improvement in services to siblings in care. Children in care told us they want us to ensure they are kept together with their brothers and sisters and where this is not possible that we ensure their relationships are supported and protected. This has led to new procedures, training, guidance, and events to support sibling relationships.</p> <p>Other examples include young people co-training alongside adult trainers in three separate ongoing workshops for newly qualified social care staff.</p> <p>Additionally, we have initiated work with parents who have lived experience of child protection processes, early support, and as foster carers. Examples of key achievements include involving the voice of parents/carers as part of the Families First Pathfinder.</p>
<p>SEND & Inclusion IMPACT Parent Carer Voice</p>	<p>We have also developed a Young Person's Forum for SEND called IMPACT. An example of a key achievement in this area of work includes the production of a short film for professionals called "Wrong Size Fits All" (Link: Wrong Size Fits All). This would give a voice to young people with SEND about their lived experience in school. The video has been used to train and support teachers, SEND practitioners, social workers, and youth workers in how best to understand, and support young people.</p> <p>We also continue to work with Warwickshire Parent Carer Voice on a range of projects, including the development of the SEND Strategy and co-production framework</p> <p>Representatives of both groups are full members of the Warwickshire SEND Partnership Board, helping to influence policy and service development.</p>
<p>Co Production Framework</p>	<p>The Council's Co-Production Framework document communicates our approach to ensuring that we work together with those using our services to design and improve those services to achieve better outcomes. The Framework ensures our approach is consistent and follows good practice. The Council has also commissioned a contract to enable direct specialist engagement and co-production activities with customers.</p>
<p>Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)</p>	<p>The Warwickshire JSNA work programme has produced two JSNAs in the past year. The first is the Empowering Futures: Growing Up Well in Warwickshire JSNA.</p>

	<p>This JSNA examines the picture of physical health in school-aged children and young people, taking a new approach to produce a live and iterative interactive report. The second is the Adults with a Learning Disability JSNA. This JSNA examines the needs of the adult population with a learning disability aged 16 and over. The reports have been published and the findings shared with key partners across the health and care system to encourage action on the findings and recommendations.</p> <p>The JSNA work programme has also started providing JSNA Updates to keep stakeholders up to date with the new JSNA work programme which begins in April 2025. For more information about all Warwickshire's JSNAs, visit our website.</p>
Employee Engagement Approach	<p>We have an approach to Engaging with Our People, which ensures we listen, learn and act to create an inclusive organisation. Our Leaders and Managers hear and can then act on feedback from our people. We continue to focus on coaching and developing our people and ensuring clear communication about the direction of our Council.</p> <p>This approach is supported by employee forums and networks, and regular employee surveys, which measure employee engagement and our direction of travel against the Our People Strategy Delivery Plan which includes our people related measures.</p>
Your Say surveys	<p>Feedback from employees in the 'Your Say Survey' of March 2025 saw an increase in the employee engagement score to 80% (79% in February 2024), with 81% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that 'Our internal communications keep me updated on what is happening'. Themes and outcomes from the survey will be fed into the future planning around communication.</p>
Corporate Board broadcasts	<p>Regular Corporate Board and Executive Director live broadcasts, supported by Director and Team briefings, are now embedded to engage with our people.</p>
Working for Warwickshire	<p>Additional information is also provided through other mechanisms, such as regular briefings and the Working 4 Warwickshire bulletin, issued weekly.</p> <p>Our intranet pages are updated as necessary and feature topical themes. This year we have introduced "Why Warwickshire" forums, to better understand why people like working for Warwickshire and for us to understand what would keep them here. We will be using the outputs of this to inform the renewal of Our Workforce Strategy and workforce priorities.</p>
Warwickshire Pension Fund + Staff & Pensions Committee	<p>The Warwickshire Pension Fund is governed by a Staff and Pensions Committee and a Pension Fund Investment Sub-Committee. These are formal committees of the Council. Oversight and guidance are provided by the Local Pension Board of the Warwickshire Local Government Pension Fund which is a body</p>

required by legislation. This body has an Independent Chair and is made up of a combination of Employer and Employee representatives from within the Pension Fund with the purpose of supporting the Scheme Manager to secure the effective and efficient governance and administration of the Fund, looking at complying with the code of practice on the governance and administration of public service pensions schemes, the LGPS regulations and any requirements of the Pensions Regulator.

Governance is further strengthened by representation through direct communications to stakeholders, including sharing new policies such as the Funding Strategy Statement, for comment.

The Pension Fund is currently rolling out online member self-service, which is improving the accessibility of information for fund members. A review of governance has taken place in Spring 2025 and the outputs of that review will be considered further in 2025/26 to take account of any changes that may arise from Local Government Reorganisation activity and the LGPS “Fit for the Future” consultation.

The Pension Fund participates in the governance of the Border to Coast Pension Partnership, which is now the Fund's largest asset manager, and this participation is both as an owner and a client, through mechanisms including a Joint Committee and shareholder meetings and votes. There is also a Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Local Pension Board of the Firefighters’ Pension Scheme performing an equivalent role in relation to that Scheme.

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

Compliance Overview	We have a clear set of priority outcomes in our five-year Council Plan 2022-27 and associated deliverables in our two-year rolling Council Delivery Plan (CDP), formerly the Intergrated Delivery Plan, applicable for the whole of 2024/25.
Council Pan	<p>The Council Plan 2022-27 has three priorities as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority 1: A County with a thriving economy and places with the right jobs, skills, and infrastructure; • Priority 2: A place where people can live their best lives; where communities and individuals are supported to live safely, healthily, happily, and independently; and • Priority 3: A County with sustainable futures which means adapting to and mitigating climate change and meeting net zero commitments.
Council Delivery Plan	<p>The Council Plan is supported by a Council Delivery Plan which is refreshed annually and most recently approved by Cabinet in March 2025. The Council Delivery Plan sets out the Council's key strategic priority deliverables and actions over a two-year rolling programme. It is further supported by business plans at service level as relevant. Projects and investments are scrutinised to ensure they deliver against the required outcomes and meet the Council's priorities. The Council Plan is supported by other strategies, which are guided by our corporate Strategy Framework with guidance to ensure consistency in developing strategies.</p>
MTFS	<p>The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) supports the delivery of the Council Plan and is based on clear assumptions. Resources are aligned 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 identify any financial and environmental implications linked to the decisions in reports submitted.</p>
Capital programme Capital Strategy Board Capital Investment Fund Education Capital Programme	<p>Capital programme management is overseen by the Capital Strategy Board which meets regularly, is chaired by the Director of Finance and administered by Strategic Finance. The Investigation Design Fund (IDF) continues to be utilised by services to provide up front funding to gain cost certainty on capital projects prior to approval of the full budget. This is monitored by the Strategic Finance Team. The IDF forms part of the three-stage approval process for all Capital Investment Fund projects which was implemented as part of the Capital Financial Management Improvement Project.</p> <p>The Education Capital Programme is driven by strategic planning for places, as set out in the Education Sufficiency Strategy and the annual sufficiency update, to ensure we can meet our statutory duty to provide adequate school places. Education capital projects are developed via a Capital Working group and overseen by the Education Capital Access and Organisation Board. All additions to the</p>

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

Compliance Overview	<p>Arrangements are in place to report critical management information on the key aspects of delivery of the Council Plan, including reporting of finance (monthly), risk and performance (quarterly) to Corporate Board and quarterly to Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny Committees.</p> <p>We track delivery against the Council Delivery Plan on a quarterly basis alongside information on risk and performance. Our overall performance is reported quarterly to Corporate Board, Overview and Scrutiny Committees, and ultimately to Cabinet.</p> <p>All Directors have signed off statements providing assurance that they have been managing risks in their service areas.</p>
Performance Management Framework	<p>Our Performance Framework supports the delivery of the Council Plan, and includes mechanisms to assess progress, inform actions and interventions to achieve intended outcomes and benefits. The Framework is reviewed each year, and we ensure the specific performance measures included within it remain aligned with current Council priorities, as set out in the Council Delivery Plan. The Change Programmes Service monitors and scrutinises project delivery against plans and highlights actions needed to manage escalated risks and deliver project objectives. Each Directorate has escalation arrangements in place to its Directorate Leadership Team and performance reporting flows through the executive structure.</p>
Council Plan	<p>Delivery of Council Plan outcomes is tracked through multiple mechanisms including the Council Delivery Plan, business plans, strategies and programmes and project governance arrangements. The Council's staff appraisal system links Council objectives and priorities to individuals' personal objectives and personal development plans to further strengthen the assurance that activity is aligned to the Council Plan priorities.</p>
Financial challenges	<p>To help manage the significant financial challenges facing the Council and wider local government sector, financial monitoring and governance has been a key focus. Reflecting the heightened financial challenges around key services including Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, home to school transport, and Social Care, the Council has strengthened budget oversight with the formation of an executive-led Budget Delivery Oversight Group to increase scrutiny around budgets for those areas, governance around associated expenditure, and the delivery of proposed savings.</p>
Business Continuity Plans Local Resilience Forum	<p>Our Service Business Continuity Plans and procedures set out mitigating actions and contingency plans in response to potential business interruption events. We work in partnership with Coventry and Solihull Councils as part of the Coventry, Solihull, and Warwickshire (CSW) Resilience team, linking with the Warwickshire Local Resilience Forum to actively manage Civil Contingency requirements and responses.</p>

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.
Member (Councillor) Development	A refreshed development programme is delivered each year to ensure the core development needs of Councillors aligned to their respective roles, are met and to take account of new and emerging issues. Further detail is recorded in Principle A.
Our People Strategy & Delivery Plan	<p>Our People Strategy ensures our workforce can deliver the Council Plan and that they remain aligned with our vision and behaviours. Direction continued to be determined by Corporate Board with progress being overseen by the Director of Workforce and Local Services and member oversight provided by the Staff and Pensions Committee.</p> <p>The Our People Strategy recognises that the Council's people are its primary asset to enable the delivery of exceptional services to Warwickshire's communities and that the Council is a great place to work where diverse and talented people are enabled to be their best. Strategic workforce planning aims to ensure we have the right people, with the right skills in the right place, through effective planning, recruitment and retention, reward and recognition, leadership, equality, diversity, inclusion, and wellbeing. The Strategy is due for renewal during 2025, and engagement activity, with leaders, employee networks and forums will help shape it.</p>
Health and Safety	<p>The Council is committed to maintaining appropriate management arrangements to manage Occupational Health and Safety aligned with the requirements of the internationally accepted ISO 45001:2018 Health and Safety management framework. This includes ensuring that key strategic and operational Health and Safety risks are recorded as part of the Council's risk management process. As part of the Health and Safety management framework, the Council undertakes the following oversight actions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually reviews the effectiveness of the policy to ensure it remains relevant and appropriate to the Council's activities and needs. • Communicates any resulting changes to employees and others affected. • Measures the safety performance of all Council services through effective ongoing compliance audits. • Reports Health & Safety performance on a quarterly basis Directorate Leadership Teams. • Reports annually to Staff and Pensions Committee detailing the Council's Health and Safety performance and progress on the targets and objectives set. <p>To support all this, our Health and Safety policy was relaunched in January 2024. We report annually to Staff and Pensions Committee detailing the Council's Health and Safety performance and progress on the targets and objectives set.</p>

Agile working principles	Our Agile Working Principles set out how employees can work as efficiently and productively as possible, whilst maintaining a priority focus on service needs.
Staff & Pensions Committee	The Staff and Pensions Committee provides overall oversight of the development of our people and approves the Our People Strategy and its Annual Delivery Plan.
Leadership programme	In 2023, we launched our refreshed approach to leadership which outlines our commitment, expectations and the support that is available for our leaders. This includes a differentiated development offer, which enables colleagues to continue their progression at all stages from preparing for leadership to inspiring other leaders
Annual Appraisal Behaviours Framework	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. The appraisal process is aligned to the Council's Behaviours Framework and our recruitment process for senior managers applies a behavioural assessment process, which includes leadership capability and identifies personal development areas. Our approach to performance is currently being scoped, ready for development, with a planned implementation from Spring 2026.
Senior Leadership Forum	We have a Senior Leadership Forum (SLF) consisting of our Directors and Heads of Service which meets to support strategic and organisational management.
Workplace Wellbeing	We invest in the health and wellbeing of our employees with a Workplace Wellness Strategy and supporting policies and processes including those to manage sickness absence and return to work. The health & wellbeing of our people remains a top priority and as well as engaging with employees as stakeholders we have a focus on building a resilient and high performing workforce. This means we maintain wellbeing and HR policy information on dedicated intranet sites
Keeping You well and working and Thrive at work accreditation	Keeping You Well and Working , through Working4Warwickshire with links to active internal and external support networks, resources, and employee well-being check in surveys; and actions arising from those surveys. We also hold regular live staff broadcasts from Corporate Board and Executive Directors, which help to communicate key well-being messages, updates and these allow for questions and answers. Further staff engagement takes place within services. In Autumn 2024. we achieved 'silver' Thrive at Work accreditation from the West Midlands Combined Authority, in recognition of our commitment to wellbeing.
Your Say survey	We have continued our approach to listening to the voice of our people, through our ' Your Say ' engagement survey. We measure our wellbeing score, as part of our Your Say Survey, which through a combination of questions, provides a high-level score, which is

	<p>currently at 80%. The main 'Your Say' survey has seen an increase in both our participation rate, from 56% to 58% and our engagement score, which is now 80%. Workload continues to be a focus, and 66% agree that workload is manageable. In line with national benchmarks, sickness absence rates have increased and then started to stabilise in the last year, with stress and mental health being the highest reasons for long-term absence. Workforce Services have been proactively working with services, through targeted actions to reduce absence and support our people to be well and in work. This will continue to be a key focus.</p>
Inclusion	<p>Guided by Our People Strategy, with oversight from Corporate Board and input from the Council's EDI Group, this approach aims to ensure that our people feel included, valued and accepted within their team and the wider organisation. The EDI Group is chaired by the Head of Workforce Planning and Development and is comprised of diverse employees from across the Council.</p> <p>Our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and fulfilling our legal Public Sector Equality Duty is integral to everything we do including policy development, service delivery and partnership working (http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/equality).</p>
Data and cyber security	<p>The Council pursues a proactive and comprehensive approach to cyber security, focusing on maintaining a strong defence against potential threats, supported by an annual improvement plan, agreed with Executive Directors.</p> <p>The threat of Cyber-attacks is also acknowledged as one of our strategic risks and managed as part of our risk management process. Specifically, the risk is owned at an Executive Director level, with key controls to manage this risk having been identified and reviewed regularly to help maintain the risk to an acceptable level. Strategic risks are reviewed and reported quarterly throughout the year to Audit and Standards Committee.</p> <p>The Council has implemented multiple layers of security including firewalls, junk email filters, and antivirus software to protect against cyber-attacks. Regular reviews of risk and protection levels are conducted by the Head of ICT Services. Further reviews and testing of systems are undertaken with external partners to ensure compliance with required standards and leading to preventative steps being taken daily to maintain or reduce risk levels.</p> <p>Recent measures include procuring additional services for automatic detection and response to internet-based attacks, updating corporate policies to improve the security around our BYOD (Bring Your Own Device policies), and consulting with Microsoft to optimize the security elements of our ICT estate. We regularly emphasise the importance of vigilance among staff, reminding them to use strong, unique passwords, be cautious with external links, and report any suspicious activity immediately.</p> <p>This multi-faceted approach ensures that the Council remains resilient and prepared in the face of evolving cyber threats. The</p>

	Council is adopting the National Cyber Security Centre's (NCSC) Common Assessment Framework in 2025 to further enhance security approaches.
Operational Resilience	<p>Our approach to assuring operational resilience is thorough and multifaceted, focusing on both property and ICT infrastructures. This includes proactive measures in its core office sites to help manage challenges such as rising utility costs and potential power outages. We have updated our winter planning strategies to ensure that critical infrastructure remains operational during disruptions. Key sites like Shire Hall, Saltisford Complex, and Kings House have been equipped with new, modern generator capacity to maintain essential services for up to 72 hours.</p> <p>The Council's approach to providing IT backup is robust and strategic, ensuring the security, availability, and recoverability of critical data. The Council has regular and repeated offsite data backup of all critical data stores, with these maintained to ensure a recoverable position in case of data loss. Additionally, disaster recovery (DR) testing, including power and generator tests, is being conducted to ensure the effectiveness of these backups. These measures demonstrate the Council's commitment to maintaining robust offsite backup protocols to safeguard critical data and ensure business continuity, and the Council's proactive stance in safeguarding data and ensuring uninterrupted access to essential services.</p>

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 throughout the year for the Council and for Warwickshire Pension Fund.
Risk Management	<p>The Strategic Risk Management Framework was agreed by Cabinet in January 2024. The framework document is refreshed annually and considers key issues such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the identified strategic risks remain current and relevant. • Reassessment of risk appetites and associated risk themes • Completion of an assurance exercise with peer authorities. • Review of risk scoring and • Gap analysis and deep dive work for the strategic risks. <p>In September 2024, responsibility for the risk management framework and associated reporting transferred to the Corporate Policy Unit. The move reflects an opportunity to strengthen the alignment between strategic foresight, risk management and strategy development.</p> <p>During September 2024, a revised approach has been developed which:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a clearer aggregate view of risk at organisational and directorate level. • Places greater emphasis on ownership, analysis, and oversight by each DLT and risk owners. • Encourages addressing 'remedial action' on a regular basis and to align with reporting cycles. <p>During Q3 of 2024/2025 a "Deep Dive" review of all risks was undertaken at both a strategic and directorate level. This resulted in some risks being closed as well as new risks being identified in line with the Council Plan priorities.</p> <p>Strategic and Directorate Risk registers continue to be reviewed and updated at least quarterly by risk owners, control owners, leadership teams and Corporate Board, ahead of reporting to members as part of the integrated performance reports to Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny Committees. This ensures risks are controlled and mitigated. The Council continues to apply the CIPFA Code of Practice for Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption, and this is reflected in our Counter Fraud, Bribery & Corruption Framework.</p>
Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	<p>Strong financial management is achieved through a robust Medium-Term Financial Strategy process which includes comprehensive involvement of Members and Senior Officers to enable the delivery of the priorities, outcomes and objectives set out in the Council Plan and a balance between robustness of financial management and achieving the Council's ambitions.</p> <p>The Council's budget is set as part of a rolling five-year Medium Term Financial Strategy, which is reviewed annually to ensure we remain prudent, robust, and ambitious, whilst being flexible and responsive to emerging situations. The Council's strong financial management includes a range of activities and controls including policies and procedures relating to financial management (including financial planning, budgetary control, and accounting), procurement, contracting and investment</p>
Procurement & Contract Management	<p>Our control arrangements for procurement and contract management have been robustly reviewed and updated considering the new procurement legislation, which has been covered within Principle A above. An officer working group including Legal, Procurement and Contract Management experts, have worked consistently across the year to ensure all policies and procedures, notices and procurement documents are fit for use in line with the new legislative regime. Internal and external training sessions have been provided for officers at all levels including senior leaders, cost centre managers, commissioners and those involved in advising on procurement activity to ensure the organisation is as ready as it can be for the new regime. Work will continue to modify processes as additional guidance is released by government.</p>
Information and Cyber Security	

Performance framework	Details of our Performance Framework have been provided under Principle D. Performance is reported to Overview & Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet on a quarterly basis. A suite of reports and dashboards provides HR, finance, risk and performance data to Executive Directors, Directors and Heads of Service for their areas of responsibility. This enables managers to interrogate information quickly and efficiently and identify any interventions needed.
Revenue programmes Sustainable Futures Board Creating Opportunities Board	For revenue programmes and projects , governance arrangements have been consistent throughout the 2024/25 year and consolidate the changes made in 2022/23. All revenue programmes and projects have been governed through the Directorate Leadership Teams during 2024/25 with each Executive Director responsible for reporting back to Corporate Board and/or escalating by exception. Two cross-cutting boards have remained reporting to Corporate Board, Sustainable Futures and Creating Opportunities (formerly Levelling Up).
Change programme	Change Programmes Service provide officer support in the delivery of programmes and projects outlined in the Council Delivery Plan, using professional standards, agreed governance controls and use of our electronic governance system. During 2024/25 we have reviewed the Change Programmes Service operating model and will during 2025/26 be implementing the outcomes of that review.
Internal audit Audit & Standards Committee	<p>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 as well as whistleblowing policies (updated November 2023) and procedures. Internal Audit provide advice to service areas and change projects to help ensure the control environment remains strong. There is regular reporting on audit assurance outcomes to the Audit & Standards Committee.</p> <p>All public sector internal audit services are required to measure how well they are conforming to the standards. This can be achieved through undertaking periodic self-assessments, external quality assessments, or a combination of both methods. However, the standards state that an external reviewer must undertake a full assessment or validate the Internal Audit Service's own self-assessment at least once in a five-year period. See below for details of the last external assessment.</p>
Public service audit standards	<p>In February 2023, an independent review was performed by a representative of CIPFA to determine how Internal Audit has applied the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards PSIAS (revised 2016, 2017 and to be revised again for implementation in January 2025 following updating of global standards in January 2024) and CIPFA Local Government Application Note (LGAN) in practice. The review confirmed compliance with all requirements and there were no areas of partial or non- compliance. The audit opinion stated, "It is our opinion that the self-assessment for the Warwickshire County Council's Internal Audit Service is accurate, and we therefore conclude that the <i>Internal Audit Service generally conforms to the requirements of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and the CIPFA Local Government Application Note.</i>"</p> <p>We gain assurances on internal control from:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director annual assurance statements; • Social care quality assurance policy and procedures; • Internal Audit work programme reports; • Risk management arrangements; and • External sources of assurance including external audit opinions, statutory inspections, third party reviews and whole Council or service specific peer reviews.
Investment Fund and Strategy	In the 2024/25 Investment Strategy, the Warwickshire Investment Fund was reshaped. This included closing the bulk of the Business Investment Growth pillar of the Fund as demand was not sufficient. The other pillars of the fund remain active and continue to provide valuable support to businesses seeking to invest in Warwickshire and those Warwickshire business wishing to expand and develop.
Warwickshire Safeguarding	We actively promote safeguarding to prevent harm and reduce the risk of abuse or neglect, working with partners, including via the Warwickshire Safeguarding Boards for Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care. (https://www.safeguardingwarwickshire.co.uk/).

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

Compliance Overview	<p>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).</p> <p>Each year we publish information on our website outlining how we spend Council Tax income.</p>
Forward Plan Webcasts Intranet	<p>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 via the Council's website and our democracy pages provide information on how the Council's democratic process operates, contact details for Councillors, information on the remit of committees and the options for the public to engage with meetings. (http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/democracy).</p>
Corporate Board and Directorate Leadership Teams	Corporate Board , supported by Directorate Leadership Teams , takes responsibility for providing overall leadership and strategic direction to officers and specifically, for ensuring that the Council meets its statutory obligations and exercises sound corporate governance, effective resource management, and that the performance of the Council is managed effectively, including the

	delivery of key aspects of our change programmes.
Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs)	Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) 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).
Audit and Standards Committee	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 measures for the maintenance of probity. In line with good practice, the Committee is chaired by an independent member. Following the retirement of the previous Chair, a new Independent Chair has been recruited along with an additional independent member to sit on the Committee, bringing the independent membership to three. All have significant experience of governance, finance and audit and provide a robust challenge role for the Council which is particularly valuable in the current financial climate nationally for local government,
Modern.Gov	All reports that are subject to decision making by a formal Committee, or for Leader / Deputy Leader / Portfolio Holder decisions, are considered by legal and finance colleagues who sign-off at the final stage before being released by Democratic Services. We use the Modern.Gov system to manage our process for drafting committee reports and formal decision making, and this supports consistent governance arrangements and appropriate checks through the report writing process.
Internal Audit	The Internal Audit Manager is designated as the Head of Internal Audit. Internal Audit reports regularly to Corporate 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.
External Inspections - HMICFRS, Ofsted, CQC	<p>In 2024/2025, the Council completed registration of three further Children's homes, taking the total to four Children's Homes. The existing Children's Home (Cherry Tree House) and two of the newly registered homes, had further regulatory graded inspections and were graded as 'good' in all areas. Cherry Tree House had a further Ofsted inspection on the 28th/29th January 2025 and again was graded good on all counts.</p> <p>As the Council is a Families First for Children Pathfinder Local Authority, there have been no further inspections in 2024/25.</p> <p>There have been no inspections or assurance visits in 2024/25 by the Care Quality Council (CQC) for either the Reablement Service or the Council's Adult Social Care delivery. The Council is preparing for Local Authority CQC assurance. This includes but is not limited to, reviewing and enhancing our current practices and policies to deliver compliance. Regular audits and internal assessments are being carried out to identify and address any areas requiring improvement. We are also updating our documentation and record-keeping systems to ensure accuracy. By fostering a culture of continuous improvement and open communication, we aim to demonstrate our commitment to</p>

	<p>meeting our duties under the Care Act.</p> <p>Adult Community Learning received a support visit from Ascentis the awarding organisation for our new qualifications in Nov 2024 and was deemed fully compliant. The service also completed an internal verification for Essential Digital Skills Qualification (EDSQ) in Jan 2025.</p> <p>In February 2025, WFRS had a re-inspection against the causes of concern arising from the previous inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) which confirmed that the service has successfully discharged all areas of concern.</p>
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6. Review of effectiveness and improvements to governance arrangements

Recognising the changes set out in Section 4 and having set out and evidenced how we meet the Governance principles in Section 5, it is a critical aspect of good governance that we also acknowledge where there are areas that can be further strengthened.

Accordingly, we have agreed a **Governance Improvement Action Plan** (Appendix 2) which is informed by:

- **Governance issues and challenges** - We have not experienced any major governance issues during the last year, and our arrangements remain fit for purpose and in accordance with the governance framework. However, we focus on continuous improvement and development of best practice.
- **Significant risks** - A primary purpose of the governance framework is to identify and manage strategic risks proactively and to ensure risks are appropriately mitigated. The Strategic Risk Management Framework was updated and approved by Cabinet in January 2024 and has been in place during this Annual Governance Statement period. It is and should remain a living document and the Council's strategic risks were therefore considered and refreshed during 2024/25 as part of the Council's commitment to good governance, with quarterly risk reviews taking place throughout the year. As in earlier years, global issues including macro-economic factors, inflationary pressures and international conflict continue to influence the Council's view of risk. The most up to date strategic risk register has been used for the purpose of this AGS and is appended at Appendix 1. The approach to risk ensures that risks are considered and mitigating actions identified can be monitored and reported against on a quarterly basis.
- **Major Improvement Plan** - The Council Plan 2022-2027 sets out the vision, priorities, and areas of focus for the Council. The associated Council Delivery Plan details how these ambitions and priorities will be achieved, highlighting key priority deliverables and areas for improvement. The two-year rolling Council Delivery Plan (CDP) was refreshed and approved by Cabinet in March 2025.

Where relevant these areas have helped shape the content of the Annual Governance action plan for 2025/26.

We have sought not to create further duplication where these actions are already being monitored, but instead to focus on those where there is a clear governance element.

Progress against these actions will be tracked throughout the year.

Given that the Annual Governance Statement will not be approved by Council until December 2025, alongside the statement of accounts, the actions in the 2025/26 action plan will be progressed before this date.

Appendix 1 – Strategic risks – Quarter 4 2024/25

The following table set out WCC's strategic risks for the end of year 2024/25.

Since Q2 2024/25 responsibility for the co-ordination and reporting of both Strategic and Directorate risk moved across to the Corporate Policy & Strategy team.

All risks are reviewed by both risk and control owners each quarter – including updates to scores, controls, and actions to be taken. These are then presented to presented to all Directorate Leadership Teams, Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny Committees every quarter.

	Strategic Risk	Owner	Residual Score	Target score
1	Slow economic growth & increase in inequalities across communities - Challenging economic conditions, slow growth in Warwickshire and increasing inequalities across communities.	Mark Ryder	12	12
2	Mismatch between demand and resources -- Increases in demand and / or reductions in resources creating a mismatch, which leads to being unable to meet the needs of the people and communities of Warwickshire.	Corporate Board	16	12
3	Being unable to keep the vulnerable children & adults of Warwickshire safe - Inability to keep children and vulnerable adults safe leads to a risk of serious harm to them and presents a reputational risk to the local authority.	Becky Hale/ Nigel Minns	10	10
4	Lack of movement towards Sustainable Futures - Lack of tangible movement towards reducing carbon emissions and our sustainable futures commitments.	Mark Ryder	15	10
5	Business Continuity - Lack of resilience and effective continuity arrangements leads to operational failures (renamed Q3 24/25).	Corporate Board (Mark Ryder)	8	6
6	Insufficient skilled & experienced workforce - Sustained labour market challenges lead to WCC being unable to recruit and retain people resulting in reduced capacity and capability and increasing workloads of our people.	Corporate Board (Rob Powell)	8	8
7	Cyber-attack – A cyber-attack leads to compromised systems and / or data either directly or within supply chains.	Rob Powell	15	8
8	A safe environment may not be sustained - Provision of a safe environment and infrastructure for our workforce may not be sustained.	Monica Fogarty	8	8
9	Failure of Governance arrangements - Within the operating environment, there may be challenges to the Council's governance arrangements.	Rob Powell	6	6
10	Dedicated Schools Grant – Risk to the Council's financial resilience and sustainability, as a result of the cumulative deficit of the Dedicated School Grant. (added at Q4 2024/25).	Nigel Minns	16	12

Appendix 2 – Governance Improvement Action Plan

Completed actions from 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement

Table 1: Governance Improvement Actions from 2023/24	Action Owner
The Governance Team (Legal Services) worked with colleagues across the Council to implement actions from the governance stocktake against the Framework and as agreed by Corporate Board.	Director of Strategy Planning and Governance
The Pension Fund responded to the Scheme Advisory Board's Good Governance Review and the Pension Regulator's General Code of Practice as the requirements were issued. A report was taken to Staff and Pensions Committee in December 2024 with an external assessment of our compliance with the code. Subsequently, a paper went to Staff and Pensions Committee with a full governance review and an action plan is being developed from these assessments.	Head of Investments, Audit & Risk
Targeted consideration of aspects of the Constitution and the Codes of Conduct was undertaken, and the Constitution was updated in September 2024.	Head of Legal & Governance
Responded to the new Procurement legislation by strengthening procurement practices across the Council as appropriate.	Director of Strategy Planning and Governance & Director of Finance
We implemented an improvement plan for School Admissions processes and practices.	Head of Access to Education
The Council's Strategic Risk Management Framework was reviewed and refreshed.	Head of Investments, Audit & Risk
Reviewed and improved the end-to-end approach to education capital programme procurement	Head of Property
An action plan was developed and implemented in response to the full inspection of WFRS undertaken by HMICFRS and which reported in September 2023.	Chief Fire Officer
A review of Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) was completed.	Executive Director for Children & Young People
Ethical standards to be defined in adopting artificial intelligence in the delivery of Council services. We have developed ethical principles and are continuing to develop our roadmap on the use of AI.	Head of Business Intelligence

2025/26 Action Plan

The following actions will be undertaken in 2025/26 to further strengthen the governance framework and built into either the Council Delivery Plan and/or relevant Business Plans

Issue	Action to be taken	Action Owner
Implement the elements of the Council's Level 2 devolution deal	<p>Rationale – Warwickshire's Level 2 devolution deal was secured in March 2024 with elements for adult skills, planning and strengthened partnerships to land in 2025/26</p> <p>Action to be taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt new Compulsory Purchase Order powers to be available for use as necessary • Secure Adult Skills Funding and implement associated processes and systems to meet the readiness criteria set by central government • Produce a new Skills Strategy and 'Get Back to Work' plan for Warwickshire, to meet new national policy requirements 	Director of Economy and Director of Strategy, Planning & Governance
Effectively deliver the 2025 County Council Elections and the effective induction of new Councillors	<p>Rationale - County Council elections will be held in May 2025.</p> <p>Action to be taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a full programme of election support and delivery • Fully scope and deliver the New Councillor induction programme 	Director of Strategy, Planning and Governance
Ensuring strong governance of the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) programme	<p>Rationale – Nationally led Local Government Reorganisation requires the development of a full proposal for reform in Warwickshire by 28th November 2025, with a decision expected to be made by Government in Spring 2026.</p> <p>Action to be taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure effective governance, coordination, and communication of the final proposal for submission to Government • Commence early implementation planning in time for a decision point on the agreed model by Government – currently expected Spring 2026 	Chief Executive
Implementing recommendations from independent Pension Fund	<p>Rationale – An independent review into Pension Fund governance was commissioned during 2024/25 and made several recommendations that the Pensions Team will</p>	Director of Finance

Governance Review	<p>be considering and bringing forward for discussion over the course of 2025/26</p> <p>Action to be taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of agreed action plan to provide assurance as to the effective governance of the Warwickshire Pension Fund. 	
Maintaining a balanced budget and MTFS and managing continued increases in costs and demand	<p>Rationale - Effective leadership and governance of the MTFS, during a period of continued challenges, growing demand, rising costs and uncertain budgets</p> <p>Action to be taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closely monitor and manage our operating environment, ensuring that target savings are being delivered and manage the risks related to maintaining a balanced budget and agreed MTFS. • Addition and ongoing tracking of a strategic risk for Dedicated Support Grant as part of the quarterly strategic risk reporting framework to Corporate Board and Cabinet. 	Executive Director for Resources
Prepare for external inspection of key services	<p>Rationale – Whilst dates are not yet known, ensure the Council and relevant services are fully prepared for anticipated external inspection in key service areas</p> <p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare for the Care Quality Commission inspection of Adult Social Care • Prepare for the SEND Local Area inspection • Prepare for the Inspection of Local Authority Children's services inspection • Prepare for the inspection of Youth Justice Service • Ongoing inspection of Warwickshire Children's Homes (completed annually) • Prepare for HMICFRS inspection for Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service 	<p>Director of Education</p> <p>Director of Social Care and Support</p> <p>Director of Children & Families</p> <p>Chief Fire Officer</p>
Refreshed Governance Stocktake *	<p>Rationale – Assuring ourselves that our governance arrangements are robust through a periodic stocktake is a key component of good governance.</p>	Director of Strategy Planning and Governance

	<p>The two-yearly stocktake (originally scheduled for Autumn 2024) will take place following completion of the 2025 elections with findings reported by 31 December 2025.</p> <p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake governance stocktake refresh and identify any actions to be undertaken 	
<p>Develop learning on governance and decision making aimed at committee report writers*</p>	<p>Rationale – robustness of information presented to members for decision making is an essential part of good governance.</p> <p>Following further consideration of the proposal for an e-learning module contained in the 2023/24 AGS action plan, it was considered that in-person training would be a more effective delivery model. Democratic Services have been undertaking individual and team-based training with officers in relation to the use of the committee management system and the route to decision making which have been helpful and welcomed</p> <p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider how to further integrate report writing and wider governance issues into induction training and training for those officers new to report writing. 	<p>Director of Strategy, Planning and Governance</p>
<p>Build on the capital financial management framework project</p>	<p>Rationale - Following a root and branch review of the capital financial management framework which concluded in 2023, ongoing works seeks to enhance management of capital budgets.</p> <p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve governance through the existing officer Capital Strategy Group and associated directorate forums; Use of new automation tools to create more capacity for finance to add value, advise and challenge; and Development of a capital management dashboard for project managers including RAG rating of forecasts. 	<p>Director of Finance</p>
<p>Delivery of the Children and Young People change</p>	<p>Rationale - SEND remains a critical priority for the Council with improvement activity delivered and monitored within the current Council Delivery Plan</p>	<p>Director of Education</p>

<p>programme - SEND</p>	<p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll-out the Inclusion Framework trial to further families of schools to improve SEN Support in schools; • Deliver a workforce development programme, designed with school leaders, to maintain support and confidence for supporting children with EHC plans in mainstream schools; and • Implement proposals for establishing and expanding new and existing SEND Resourced Provision – as an additional level of provision and an alternative to specialist provisions where appropriate 	
<p>Continued focus on ethical standards in adopting digital tools to assist the delivery of Council services to supplement existing guidance to staff on artificial intelligence.*</p>	<p>Rationale – AI remains a key area of development and opportunity for all organisations and across the public sector. It is important that the Council implements new digital tools to appropriate ethical standards.</p> <p>Initial guidance on the appropriate use of Artificial Intelligence tools has been issued to staff. A Data & Artificial Intelligence Ethics Policy has been drafted so that the Council can ensure it is utilising new technologies and capabilities in appropriate ways.</p> <p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that we continue to prioritise and develop policies as guidance from government and the Information Commissioner's Office is updated focussing on digital automation, artificial intelligence, and the responsible and lawful use of data across the organisation and with partners. 	<p>Director of Enabling and Director of Strategy, Planning and Governance</p>

Note - those items marked * are carried forward from 2024/25

Appendix 3 – Evidence base

Publicly available evidence to support this statement is listed below – electronic links have been included:

Frameworks

Decision making framework/The Constitution	The Constitution
Financial Regulations	The Constitution
WCC Behaviours Framework	Behaviours Framework
Our Approach to Engaging with Our People	Our Approach to Engaging with Our People
WCC Approach to Agile Working	Our Approach to Agile Working
WCC Appraisal Guidance	Appraisal guidance
WCC Consultation & Engagement Framework	Ask Warwickshire
Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)	Warwickshire JSNA
Risk Management	Strategic Risk Management Framework
Performance framework incl. Key Business Measures	Business Planning and Performance Management Framework
MTFS & quarterly financial reporting	Quarterly Financial reporting
Counter Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Framework	Counter Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Framework

Committees

Council meetings including inspection outcomes	Council meetings
Local Resilience Forum	Warwickshire Resilience Forum
Creating Opportunities Board	Creating Opportunities
Audit & Standards Committee	Audit and Standards Committee
Warwickshire Adult & Children's Safeguarding Boards	Safeguarding in Warwickshire
Corporate Board and DLTs	Organisational structure

Policies

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy Statement 2022	WCC Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy Statement
Whistleblowing Policy 2023	WCC Whistleblowing Policy
Register of Interests for Members (Councillors) available to view by clicking on each member individually	Register of Interests for Members
Members (Councillors) Code of Conduct	WCC Member's Code of Conduct
Complaints policy & Customer Feedback	Customer feedback and complaints
Agile working principles	Our Approach to Agile Working
Information Rights Policy	Information Rights Policy

Strategies & Plans

Council Plan 22-27 MTFS	WCC Strategies and policies
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Internal Audit Strategy	Internal Audit Strategy and Plan 2025-2026
Medium Term Financial Strategy (2025-26 Revenue Resolution)	Medium Term Financial Strategy (2025-26 Revenue Resolution)
Council Delivery Plan for 2025-2027	Council Delivery Plan 2025-27
Sustainable Futures Strategy	Sustainable Futures Strategy
Sustainable Futures Action Plan	Sustainable Futures Action Plan
Our People Strategy	Our People Strategy
Our People Strategy Annual Review 2023-24	Our People Strategy Annual Review
Child Friendly Warwickshire Strategy	Child Friendly Warwickshire
Children and Young People Strategy	Children and Young People Strategy
Employee Engagement Strategy	Our People 23/24
Health and Wellbeing Strategy	Health and Wellbeing Strategy
Procurement Strategy	Procurement Strategy

Other

Capital Strategy Board Terms of Reference	Capital Strategy Board Terms of Reference
Corporate Parenting	WCC Corporate Parenting Panel
Children in Care Council & Care Leavers Forum	Be Heard-Child Friendly Warwickshire
Parent Carer Voice & IMPACT (SEND)	Be Heard-Child Friendly Warwickshire
Council Meetings – Modern.Gov	WCC Council Meetings
Warwickshire Youth Council	Be Heard-Child Friendly Warwickshire
Silver Thrive at Work Award	WCC Latest News: WCC earns Silver Thrive at Work Award
Values and Behaviours	Our Values and Behaviours