

**ANNUAL
GOVERNANCE
STATEMENT
2019/20**

Annual Governance Statement 2019 – 2020

Scope of Responsibility

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council ('the Authority') is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Authority also has a general duty under the Local Government Measure (Wales) 2009 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

The Authority has approved and adopted a Code of Governance, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government". A copy of the code is available from the Governance and Partnerships Section.

This statement explains how the Authority has complied with the code and also meets the requirements of regulation 5 of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 in relation to the publication of a statement on internal control to accompany the Statement of Accounts.

For 2019/20 an additional section has been included to specifically reference the measures taken to respond to and manage the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic. Reference to activities as a response to Covid 19 is also made throughout the document where it is appropriate to do so.

The Purpose of the Governance Framework

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

The system of internal control is a significant part of the framework and is designed to manage risk at a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an

ongoing process designed to identify the key risks of the Authority, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically. These will include achievement or not of the Council's policies, aims and objectives.

The governance framework has been in place at the Authority for the year ended 31 March 2020 and up to the date of approval of the Annual Statement of Accounts.

In June 2019 the Audit Wales published their Annual Improvement Report for 2018-19. The conclusion of the report was, "The Council is meeting its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement but faces challenges going forward" and "based on, and limited to, the work carried out by Audit Wales and relevant regulators, the Auditor General believes that the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Measure (2009) during 2019-20. However, the Council faces significant financial pressures which will need continued attention in the short and medium term to reach a stable and sustainable position".

Details of the Proposals for Improvement issued by regulators during 2019/20 are available from the Corporate Performance Team, and progress against their achievement is included in the Joint Finance and Performance Report. These proposals are attached at Appendix A.

The Governance Framework

The governance framework includes the key elements of the systems and processes that comprise the Authority's governance arrangements, along with an assessment of their effectiveness. The ways in which the Authority demonstrates this are discussed below. Each core principle set out in the Authority's Code of Governance is identified, along with the self-assessment of how well it is applied and how we propose to improve in future. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the Senior Managers, who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the draft Audit and Risk Manager's annual report, and by the commentary from the external auditors and other regulators.

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

How we do this:

A Governance Framework exists that sets out the standards and processes to be adopted by both Members and Officers. Codes of Conduct, detailing Member / Officer relations, are contained within the Constitution and all are required to make declarations of any interests that impact on their positions / functions. These documents are periodically reviewed and

updated, and are influenced by best practice and recommendations from both internal and external regulators.

Members' declarations are retained by the Monitoring Officer and Officers' declarations are held by Service Managers. All Council meetings are conducted in accordance with the agreed democratic process and have declarations of interest as part of the agenda, with any declarations noted in the minutes and Members withdrawing or not taking part in the debate as appropriate.

A Policy Framework exists to guide both Members and Officers in fulfilment of their roles. This includes a Whistle-Blowing policy enabling Members, Officers and the public to report any concerns regarding the integrity and operations of the Authority. In addition, policies such as disciplinary or grievance procedures have been formulated for dealing with breaches to the codes.

Both Officers and Members are advised through the induction process of the standards of behaviour required by the Council throughout their term of office or employment. Continued adherence to the ethical values of the Authority is confirmed through a performance review protocol for all Officers and a Personal Development Review (PDR) / Competency Framework (CF) in place for Members. The PDR / CF is a mandatory process for senior salary holders, and non-senior salary holders are also offered the opportunity to undertake a PDR / CF.

The Authority's constitution has a published Scheme of Delegation of Functions, which is agreed and published annually. This scheme details subject areas, and identifies the bodies or individuals responsible for decision making. It sets out the terms of reference for the various committees in operation. In addition, both the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer have oversight of the decisions made by the Authority to ensure their lawfulness and financial probity.

Review of Effectiveness:

Each Committee conforms to legislative requirements including compliance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The decision making process is documented and the Authority's Scrutiny Committees can 'call in' a decision which has been made by the Executive Committee but not yet implemented. No decisions were called in during 2019/20.

Work has continued to strengthen Blaenau Gwent's Scrutiny arrangements. A Scrutiny Action Plan continues to be implemented and monitored through the Democratic Services Committee and Council. This plan has been further enhanced by incorporating actions that relate to Democratic Services and Member Support.

Reference to the scrutiny function is also included within the Performance Management Framework.

Mandatory sessions on the Constitution including roles and responsibilities are held for all new Members.

The Ombudsman received one complaint against members in 2018/19 in relation to Blaenau Gwent. This was investigated and no finding of breach was notified to the Council. A further seven complaints of maladministration were made none of which were investigated by the Ombudsman. Information for 2019/20 is not yet available.

There were no whistle-blowing incidents reported to the Authority during the year.

Recommendations for Development:

- Continued adherence to the Authority's policies and procedures which exist to guide Members and Officers to comply with the Council's expectations in terms of acting with integrity.
- To evidence the robust application of the Authority's Code of Conduct, an Internal Audit review of the declarations of interest process will be undertaken.
- In line with good practice, an Annual review (as a minimum) of the Constitution and Scheme of Delegation to ensure the Authority's governance and decision making processes remain fit for purpose.
- Continued application of the Members Performance Development Review Scheme and competency framework.
- Continued application of the Officers Performance Review Scheme.
- Audit plans for future years will include testing a range of policies and procedures.

Core Principle B
Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

How we do this:

The Council continues to develop the way in which it engages with the community and new processes for engagement with the Town and Community Council have been developed. Over the last 12 months the Council has undertaken the following engagement activities:

- **Strategic Equalities Plan** - Engaging over 6,000 people over 6 events on identifying what the Council's key equalities priorities are. With 96 online questionnaire responses being received;
- **Active Travel & Blaenau Gwent on the Move** – Engaging over 4,000 people through a series of local community events and via social media promotion.
- **Street Scene** – 204 responses to survey. 750 people engaged with across the 9 events.
- **Period Equity** – All Primary and Secondary Schools engaged to promote the Period Equity Programme. Including a special session held with 44 members of the Children's Grand Council.
- **Staff survey / engagement sessions** – Over 700 staff completed the Staff Survey which provided insight into how staff feel about working for the council, where we are performing well as an employer and provided information on where we can make

improvements. Following the staff survey, a series of staff engagement sessions were also held which saw 191 in attendance, including a Special Managers Conference with 138 in attendance.

The Blaenau Gwent Local Well-being Plan 2018 to 2023 sets out the main priorities for strategic partnership working. To support the Plan for its implementation the PSB has developed a Strategic Work Programme which was signed off in January 2020. This Work Programme has identified five high level actions to be taken forward:

- First 1,000 days and Early Years Pathfinder;
- Building a healthier Gwent / Integrated Well-being Networks;
- Climate Change;
- Blaenau Gwent Sustainable Food Programme; and
- Foundational Economy.

Each of the high level actions has an identified PSB sponsor.

The Engagement Team successfully planned and implemented the PSB Well-being Events in March 2019. There were four events held across the borough with over 400 people coming along and getting involved in events covering Connecting Generations, Arts for our Hearts, Get out in Nature and Healthy Body, Healthy Mind. The Council has been proactively working with Audit Wales to consider the Council's opportunities and levers for change relating to public engagement. This audit was followed up with an additional audit regarding engagement called Service User Perspective. The Council has received feedback from Audit Wales regarding the Levers for Change Audit and Service User Perspective and a management response was prepared. In November 2019, the Executive approved a Council Engagement Strategy.

There has been a review of the Corporate Engagement Strategy & Action Plan and steps taken to progress key actions. In November 2019 a draft Involvement & Engagement Programme was developed building on the previous Blaenau Gwent We Want Engagement Programme. In August 2020 CLT considered an options paper for restarting the engagement service using digital and virtual platforms.

During 2018/19, the Council developed a Corporate Plan 2018/22 which included revised Well-being Objectives (which also act as Improvement Objectives). In summer 2020, the Council undertook a review of the Corporate Plan linked to the response and learning to date from Covid 19 and what the Council is aiming to achieve by the end of the Plan in 2022. This resulted in some amendments being made to the Well-being Objectives in order to better demonstrate the contribution different areas across the Council will contribute to achieving then, enhancing our One Council approach. The overall emphasis of each Well-being Objective has not changed:

- **Protect and enhance our environment and infrastructure to benefit our communities**
- **Support a fairer sustainable economy and community**
- **To enable people to maximise their independence, develop solutions and take an active role in their communities**

- **An ambitious and innovative council delivering the quality services we know matter to communities**

Blaenau Gwent continues to work with a wide range of partners where partnership opportunities provide better outcomes for local residents than the Council could achieve if working on its own. We work in partnership with a variety of stakeholders including staff, residents and businesses. Examples of collaborations and partnerships include:

- Education Achievement Service (EAS)
- Shared Resource Service (SRS)
- Public Service Board (PSB)
- Cardiff Capital Region City Deal
- Local Nature Partnership Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen
- Tech Valleys
- Valley Task Force
- South east Wales Safeguarding Board (GWASB)
- Greater Gwent Health, Social Care and Well-being Partnership;

The Council has an established engagement framework for staff and the Council's Trade Union and Consultation Framework has been reviewed and updated this year. The Partnership and Engagement Team has developed an overarching Council Engagement Framework which includes engagement with staff. A staff survey was distributed in 2019, the results were analysed and a set of high level actions were agreed by CLT.

Review of Effectiveness:

To ensure relevant stakeholders are engaged throughout the Council's policy development and decision making processes, comprehensive engagement events have been held throughout the year.

The Policy, Partnership and Engagement Team have supported a number of engagement and participation activities and events. The Council continues to hold a number of key engagement and participation activities and events including: monthly Youth Forums; School Grand Council each school term; quarterly Over 50's Network and Forum; and equality focused Access for all Forums. The Council also continues to develop its use of social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook and Flickr.

After another challenging year for Social Services in 2018/19, we were anticipating another difficult and challenging year ahead. The Strategy to Safely Reduce the number of Children Looked After 2017-2020 continues and the Supporting Change Team has been externally evaluated and shown to both prevent children going into care and been able to support some children to leave care and return home successfully

A co-produced commissioning strategy entitled 'Our Vision and Intentions for Adults Advocacy, 2019-24', has now been completed and was launched in October 2019 and the new advocacy helpline, Gwent Access to Advocacy (GATA), was also launched and rolled out to Partners.

The new model in the Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) Team has embedded well across the operational teams within both adults and children's services with clearly scoped out roles and responsibilities to meet our citizens' expectations and to improve services in the community. Extensive work has been ongoing to plan for the launch of the new Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019) during Safeguarding week 11th to 14th November 2019. The Project Board responsible for the new procedures are in the process of implementing a communications strategy. The Police now have a presence within the Children's IAA team which further strengthens their response time for safeguarding referrals.

Over the previous 12 months our Community Options staff in conjunction with Care Management have undertaken transport eligibility assessments with all individuals accessing day opportunities utilising Social Services assisted transport. A transport policy has been developed and approved by Council. This has resulted in the vast majority of service users accessing services independently.

An ICF funding application was successful to develop an additional 2 self-contained accommodation units in the grounds of Augusta house. The additional space will be fully adapted for people with complex physical and learning disabilities, supporting the priority of the LD Strategic Partnership by supporting people with a learning disability and young adults with complex needs through the transition process, supports assessment to ensure that independence is promoted.

The Brexit Core Planning Group (BCPG) have co-ordinated engagement activities with local business groups and individual businesses to determine their views, concerns and preparations for UK exiting the EU, as well as to understand any local reliance on skills and workers from the EU.

Engagement with staff regarding the process for staff supervision has been undertaken which has led to improvements to the process in order to encourage discussion in identified areas.

A staff survey was undertaken in January 2019 which led to further development of employee engagement to include; a suite of staff engagement events with the Managing Director and Leader of the Council meeting with staff to discuss the future direction of the Authority and answer questions on matters of interest: a leadership seminar in October 2019 with follow up sessions planned. These sessions have been put on hold due to the emergency response to Covid.

Engagement arrangements with Audit Wales are in place with monthly meetings with the Head of Governance and Partnerships, regular meetings with the Section 151 Officer and separate monthly meetings with the Managing Director. Quarterly meetings are also undertaken with the Leadership.

The Authority's Education Services have a regular termly Local Authority Link Inspector (LALI) meeting convened with Estyn in line with regulatory requirements. The Authority has update meetings between the Corporate Director Education, political leaders and the Welsh Government officials as and when required.

The Regional Partnership Board has submitted a 'Transformational Offer' to Welsh Government setting out proposals of how the Gwent region would support the continued development of a 'seamless system' of care, support and well-being, in response to the

Welsh Government's new long term plan for health and social care, 'A Healthier Wales'. The offer in total for Gwent amounted to £13.4 million of new limited funding over a two-year period. Four areas were selected, derived from the priority areas within the Area Plan and the considered directions of the Regional Partnership Board. These include:

- The development of early intervention and prevention services;
- The development of primary and community care services;
- The redesign of child and adolescent emotional and mental health services;
- The development of an integrated 'Home First' discharge model.

Recommendations for Development:

- Further work to be undertaken linked to the findings of the Audit Wales Levers of Change and Service User Perspective review.
- Implement the high level actions identified from the findings of the staff survey.
- Monitor progress of the Local Well-being Plan.
- Continued implementation of the Council's Engagement Programme as part of the Engagement Strategy.

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

How we do this:

The Authority has reviewed its priorities, vision and values and these are set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2018/22. The Corporate Plan acts as the Council's business plan and is directly linked to the priorities in the Well-being Plan. The Corporate Plan was approved by Council on 26th April 2018 and covers the four-year period to 2022, in line with the remainder of the term of office until the next local elections. The plan sets out five priority areas, each of which are defined by a number of aims setting out the focus of our activity. The five priorities are:

- Improving the Well-being of People who need Care and Support (Social Services)
- Improving Pupil Outcomes and Well-being (Education)
- Strong and Environmentally Smart Communities
- Economic Development and Regeneration
- Efficient Council

The priority areas also act as our Improvement Objectives as required by the Local Government (Wales) Measure.

In October 2020, the Council published its assessment of Performance for 2019/20, detailing progress made throughout the year against the priorities identified within the Plan. It also included an assessment of the work undertaken as part of the response to the global pandemic, Covid 19.

The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 established statutory Public Service Boards (PSBs) to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing across Wales by strengthening joint working across all public services. The Authority is one of five statutory members of the board.

The Blaenau Gwent PSB was established with an agreed Terms of Reference and a PSB Scrutiny Committee has also been set up through our agreed democratic processes. The Well-being Assessment and Well-being Plan have been developed and published with the Council leading on this work.

Audit Wales undertook a national review of PSBs in Wales which led to four proposals for improvement being received in October 2019 for consideration by PSBs across Wales.

The Authority has a Strategic Equality Plan that was subject to comprehensive engagement including through the Access for all Forum and the Older Peoples Network as part of its development. The Authority is committed to the principles of the Wales Procurement Policy that identifies Procurement as a strategic enabler, delivering key policy objectives to support the Council's economic, social and environmental priorities.

A consultation process was completed on the proposed approach for delivery of the Strategic Equalities Plan prior to the Member Equalities Task and Finish Group completing its work and the Strategic Equalities Plan presented for approval at Council in March 2020.

The Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP), is monitored via the Blaenau Gwent Education Forum (WEF) on a termly basis and presented to Scrutiny / Executive prior to the annual return to Welsh Government.

The Authority receives a capital allocation from Welsh Government that is used along with the capital receipt reserve to form a capital programme providing a range of sustainable benefits for the Authority. The funding is allocated based on departmental bids for projects. The bids are analysed and scored in line with a set of criteria that consider, amongst other things, the projects alignment with corporate and national priorities.

Review of Effectiveness:

To monitor progress and ensure their relevance there will be an annual review of the Corporate Plan in June 2020.

Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken against all relevant proposals, and included within the business planning framework and strategic business reviews. The Annual Report to the Equality and Human Rights Commission was published and submitted within the appropriate timescales.

The Council was issued with an updated Compliance Notice in August 2017. The Annual Welsh Language Report was sent to the Office of the Welsh Language Commissioner within the appropriate timescales. A Welsh Language internal implementation assurance audit was undertaken in early 2019. A Welsh Language Commissioners Performance meeting was held which led to positive outcomes for BGCBC. The most recent annual report was delayed owing to the global pandemic but is scheduled through the democratic process in November and December 2020.

It is a statutory responsibility for the Corporate Director of Social Services to assess the effectiveness of the delivery of Social Services and produce an Annual Report. The Annual Report contributes to and forms part of the Annual Council Reporting Framework (ACRF). The report of the Corporate Director of Social Services was presented to the Social Services Scrutiny Committee in September 2019. As part of legislative amendments made as part of the response to the global pandemic and due to the unprecedented challenges facing everyone at this time there is no requirement to submit performance data by the Director of Social Services until September 2021.

The Transformation Programme to support the continued development of a 'seamless system' of care, support and wellbeing in Gwent, in response to the Welsh Government's new long term plan for health and social care 'A Healthier Wales' has seen progress. The SPACE well-being (Single Point of Access for Children's Emotional Well-being and Mental Health) Programme hosted by Families First have shown early indications that the mental health needs of children and young people are being assessed early with the right agency taking the lead on providing the most appropriate interventions.

Compassionate Communities is also part of the Transformation Programme that aims to improve the well-being of people across Gwent. Work includes the development of IAA outreach across the Compassionate Communities within 11 GP practices and also at community and acute hospital sites, where initial positive outcomes have been reported. Compassionate Communities also include Community Connectors actively participating in Multi-Disciplinary Team Discussions and Hospital discharge follow up phone calls.

Recommendations for Development:

- Continued implementation and mainstreaming of the Welsh Language Standards across all areas of Blaenau Gwent.
- Continue to support the collective and individual body duties under the Well-being of Future Generations Act.
- Annual review of the Corporate Plan.
- To implement the new code of practice in relation to the performance and improvement framework of social services in Wales.

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

How we do this:

The Authority has strengthened its Performance Management Framework to ensure a consistent approach and accountability for performance improvement. This process has been aligned to the Risk Management Framework to provide one approach for data collection and monitoring.

A Strategic Procurement Board operates to oversee spending decisions, exercising stronger governance in line with its Medium Term Financial Strategy. The board provides challenge with regards to the merits of each spending proposal and ensures a consistent approach to spending in line with the objectives of the Authority.

The corporate reporting format has been designed to guide officers and members to consider the key implications of any proposals put forward. The report has defined areas for considering options appraisal, risk, staffing and financial impact, along with the contribution to the Sustainable Development Principles. This assists in the process for making informed and transparent decisions and ensures the links between budget and planning are considered.

Review of Effectiveness:

The Authority presents the Joint Finance and Performance Report to the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee on a quarterly basis. This report highlights key messages, performance information, workforce information, financial analysis, Strategic Business Reviews progress, Audit Wales proposals for improvement and directorate and corporate risks.

Self-evaluation arrangements are in place and continue to be refined, requiring each service area to consider how its activities contributed to the achievement of its intended outcomes and support the Council to achieve its goals. The process enables us to gather and use good quality information to better understand how we are performing.

The remit of the Strategic Procurement Board has been extended, through amendment to Contract Procedure Rules, providing it with full responsibility for contract approval as agreed by the Constitutional Working Group and Council.

Recommendations for Development:

- Review of the Performance Management Framework to ensure alignment with the Corporate Plan.
- Review of the self-evaluation process.

Core Principle E
Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.

How we do this:

Blaenau Gwent has 42 elected members who collectively make up the decision making body for the Authority. This is complemented by an officer structure of trained and experienced people.

Most policy decisions are developed by the Executive Committee, which for 2020/21 has comprised the Leader and four Members with individual portfolio responsibilities. The portfolios were agreed at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Council in March 2020.

In addition to the Executive Committee, the Authority's Committee structure also comprises three decision making Committees (1 x Planning and 2 x Licensing), five Scrutiny Committees, two Joint Scrutiny Committees, a Public Service Board Scrutiny Committee, a Standards Committee, a Democratic Services Committee and an Audit Committee.

Members are appointed to these Committees, each of which is supported by relevant officers. Payments to Members who are in positions which attract a senior salary are in line with the determinations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.

There are four statutory posts in place namely the Head of Paid Service, the Monitoring Officer, the Head of Democratic Services and the Section 151 Officer. These are satisfied by the appointments of the Managing Director, the Head of Legal and Compliance, the Head of Governance and Partnerships and the Chief Officer - Resources, respectively. These post holders are charged with ensuring elected Members receive appropriate advice

There are two further officer roles, namely, the Corporate Director of Education and the Corporate Director of Social Services who undertake statutory functions for Education and Social Services respectively. Two more officer roles are taken up by the position of Corporate Director of Regeneration and Community Services and the Chief Officer – Commercial. The role of Corporate Director Education has been filled in November 2020, following the retirement of the previous post-holder in April 2020.

The Authority has a clear set of strategic outcomes, supporting actions and competencies which relate to service delivery. Both Members and Officers receive appropriate training to enable them to develop / enhance the necessary skills to fulfil their roles.

A Performance Coaching Scheme exists for Officers and a Personal Development Review Scheme (PDRs) and Competency Framework for Members to ensure an appropriate level of competency and to identify any further training needs or continuous professional development requirements that are required for the job role, or to prepare them for future roles. Most officer posts have a detailed job description and person specification, and selection is made through a robust recruitment process to meet the specific skills and competencies of the post.

Role descriptions for Members are established and include specific role descriptions for senior member roles.

Review of Effectiveness:

In November 2018 the Council received its Level 1 Wales Charter for Member Support and Development awarded by the Welsh Local Government Association, recognising the Authority's good practice in this area. The Member Development Strategy was updated as

part of this process. A Member Induction Programme has been implemented and was aligned to the forward work programmes following the local election on 4th May 2017. Procedures for Member Personal Development Reviews (PDR) are in place. The PDR process has been enhanced with the development of a Members Competency Framework which was considered and approved at the AGM in May 2018. This process is mandatory for all senior salary holders and offered to all members.

A revised mentoring scheme for Members has been agreed by Council. Three Members have undergone mentoring training and a further three requests from Members to become mentors have been received as part of the Personal Development Review (PDR) process. Currently two Members have requested to be mentees.

A Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) operates within the Authority, consisting of the Managing Director, supported by departmental Directors and Chief Officers. These meetings are minuted and key information is disseminated to all officers through an established reporting structure.

The Authority monitors performance reviews through the management structure, feeding concerns up to CLT as appropriate. There is an established Engagement and Consultation Framework agreed with and in place for trade union involvement which has been reviewed and updated with them in 2019/20. An Engagement Strategy was introduced during 2018 which includes staff engagement.

In house, on the job training continues and essential external training is undertaken. Managers and staff have the ability to discuss capability and capacity issues as part of the performance review process.

Four members of staff have been the subject of the capability process during the period April 2019 – March 2020, and two remained open at the close of the year.

Six internal grievance procedures were instigated between April 2019 and March 2020. All were closed by the end of the year.

The Authority has operated a Leadership Programme from January 2016 to 2018 designed to build leadership knowledge and skills in those with managerial responsibilities up to and including WCLT level. A staff survey was undertaken in January 2019 to gauge current opinions and identify further areas requiring support. A new Leadership Development Programme is currently being planned for the end of 2020.

The Managing Director undertook a Senior Management Review looking at the current and future requirements of leadership roles within the council. Appointment to these roles was concluded in 2019.

Recommendations for Development:

- Develop and implement a new Leadership Development Programme.
- Analyse the findings of the staff survey and implement required actions.

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

How we do this:

The Authority has in place a Risk Management Framework that includes a Risk Management Strategy and a Risk Management Handbook. The risk management arrangements are set out in the Performance Management Framework. These set out the risk appetite of the Council and provide a methodology to ensure the consistent assessment / prioritisation of the risks the Authority faces and any mitigating actions.

The Authority continues to produce the Joint Finance and Performance Report which highlights progress in relation to finance, performance and risk.

The Council has an adopted corporate policy in place to deal with complaints. A review of monitoring the complaints has been undertaken and new processes and nominated officers have been identified. The monitoring of complaints has been identified as a key measure within the Council's Corporate Plan. Complaints information is included within the Joint Finance and Performance Report and annual Corporate Plan report.

An Audit Committee has been established in line with the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure receiving reports from internal and external regulators on the internal control environment, risk and governance. The Committee provides appropriate challenge and seeks assurance in line with its terms of reference that are laid in the constitution.

As a Local Authority it is necessary that we collect and use personal information to perform many of our day-to-day operations. The General Data Protection Act (GDPR) which came into force in May 2018 is the most comprehensive and significant change to Data Protection legislation in 20 years. The Council established a Corporate Project Group in April 2017 to manage the preparatory work for GDPR compliance. The Council's 'Information & Governance Officer' was assigned the statutory role of Data Protection Officer and the post retitled 'Data Protection and Governance Officer' to reflect this. The project group has since disbanded but reviews continue to be undertaken by the Information Governance Group (IGF) which is chaired by the Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO).

The Council implemented an Information Asset Owner structure during the GDPR project to establish clear lines of responsibility for information management. Information Asset Registers are in place for each Department to provide corporate oversight of all key information systems and to risk assess in terms of confidentiality, integrity and availability. The Council also created a Record of Processing Activities to drill down into the necessary level of detail required under GDPR and identify the lawful basis for processing all the different types of personal data that it holds. The Council has a number of Information Governance policies and procedures to manage compliance with its statutory obligations.

Review of Effectiveness:

The Authority's key governance systems continue to be risk assessed and included in the annual audit plan. Two key governance systems were subject to an internal audit, namely

Business Planning Improvement and Data, and Strategic Policy (Welsh Language). The findings of these audits have not yet been reported to the Audit Committee due to timing but will be reported as appropriate during 2020/21. A number of follow-up audits were completed during 2019/20 and progress against recommendations was found to be good. An investigation into the decommissioning of a Council building was undertaken and the findings reported to the Audit Committee. Work is being undertaken by the departments concerned to address the issues raised, and a further report will be provided to the Audit Committee to provide assurance on the improvement in controls.

The Risk Management Strategy and Handbook were reviewed and adopted by Council in February 2018. The Professional Lead – Risk and Insurance advises Departmental Management Teams and CLT to facilitate challenge / discussions on directorate risks. This has resulted in a more consistent approach to risk evaluation and reporting becoming embedded across the Council.

The highest level risks faced by the Authority are recorded on the Corporate Risk Register. The main risks facing the Authority during the period were:

Risk Description	Potential Impact
Failure to deliver and sustain the changes required to ensure that vital services are prioritised within the financial constraints faced by the Council.	Vital services will not be protected if the Council fails to find more efficient ways of working and improvements to social, economic and environmental well-being of the areas will not be achieved.
Failure to ensure adequate safeguarding arrangements are in place for vulnerable people in Blaenau Gwent.	Potential significant harm or loss of life. Long term reputational damage and confidence in the Council undermined.
Failure to deliver the Council's priorities within the agreed annual budget.	Increased use of emergency finance measures and the drawdown of reserves.
Failure of the 2 schools in Blaenau Gwent currently in receipt of Council Intervention fail to make appropriate progress against the Statutory Warning Notice to improve and their Post Inspection Action Plan.	Implementation of further statutory inventions available under the provisions set out in the School Standards and Organisation Act Wales 2013 i.e. implementation of additional grounds.
Exiting the EU will have an adverse impact at a national and local level.	Impact on the community and on the Council funding and its ability to deliver public services.
Failure to improve staff attendance rates within the Council.	Unacceptable impact on the ability of the Council to deliver services effectively and financially support the cost of sickness absence.
Failure of the Council to manage its information assets in accordance with requirements set down within legislation	Financial penalties and possible sanctions that hinder service delivery.
Increasingly complex needs and demand for services provided by Social Services, in particular for Looked After Children.	Further significant pressure on the Council's budget.
The Financial resilience of the council could be at risk if the council does not ensure that financial planning and	Inability to deliver effective / lower quality services. Unplanned reduction of services provided.

management decisions support long term stability and sustainability.	
The on-going COVID 19 pandemic presents a continued risk to service delivery.	Potential for disruption to be on a medium / long term basis as a result of pandemic.

A copy of the full Corporate Risk Register can be obtained from the Risk Management and Insurance Section.

All Strategic Business Review projects are risk assessed using the Corporate Risk Management Framework. Decisions on managing those risks are agreed and monitored as part of the project management arrangements that are in place.

All Data Protection Impact Assessments are approved by the Data Protection and Governance Officer to ensure that there are effective controls in place to mitigate the risk of a Data Protection Breach. Where a Data Protection Incident is reported, the Data Protection & Governance Officer will investigate the cause and review the responsible service area controls to ensure they are effective. The Data Protection & Governance Officer, Information Governance Forum and the Council's Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO) review the Council's information governance arrangements to ensure they are fit for purpose.

Recommendations for Development:

- To assess and demonstrate its compliance with the Local Government Measure and the aims and objectives of the Council, the annual report of the Audit Committee will be produced summarising the year's activity and evidencing their responsibilities as part of the governance arrangements.
- Regular review of Risk Management arrangements to ensure they remain fit for purpose and are implemented consistently.
- As part of the Authority's ongoing commitment to managing its risks, the Anti-Fraud, Anti-Corruption and Anti-Bribery Policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate
- Continued inclusion of key governance systems in the internal audit plan to ensure key elements of the governance framework are prioritised and examined annually.

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

How we do this:

Decision making processes for both Officers and Members are set out in the Constitution. Boundaries are clearly defined and the Committee structure includes decision making, scrutiny and regulatory functions. A set of Financial Procedure Rules and Contract Procedure

Rules have been adopted to ensure consistency, transparency and value for money in financial management and procurement. The Chief Officer Resources ensures the Authority's financial management arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2016). An annual Statement of Accounts is produced and presented to Members for scrutiny. A period of public consultation is held where members of the public can inspect the accounts.

An Audit Committee is established that has the primary functions of reviewing financial reports and challenging governance arrangements. The Committee aims to seek assurance that the governance framework operating within the Authority is robust, effective and efficient. This is achieved in part through the Committee receiving this Annual Governance Statement. The role and scope of the Audit Committee are set out in the Constitution.

The Internal Audit Service works on a risk based approach, to an annual audit plan, in order to assess the internal control environment of the Authority. The work of the section is prioritised in line with the Authority's objectives. The results of all audit work are reported to the Audit Committee who can, if necessary, call Officers to account where weak control is identified. Policies are maintained for Anti-Fraud, Anti-Corruption and Anti-Bribery, and Anti-Money-Laundering. Adherence to these is considered as part of the work of the Internal Audit function.

The Social Services Directorate is subject to audit, inspection and review by the Care Inspectorate for Wales (CIW). On a quarterly basis the Director of Social Services and Heads of Adult and Children's Services meet with CIW to discuss achievements, performance and key challenges. The Directorate is scrutinised by the Social Services Scrutiny Committee. Regular liaison meetings are held with the Directorate, the Executive Member and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

The Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014 places a statutory duty on all local authorities to produce an annual report on the discharge of its social services functions. The Council's arrangements to meet their safeguarding responsibilities are scrutinised by the Joint Education & Learning and Social Services (Safeguarding) Scrutiny Committee. The Committee exists to monitor and challenge, in order to make improvements and ensure the Council's safeguarding processes are effective.

Council meetings are held open to the public and minutes are published on the Authority's website. A number of meetings have previously been webcast. Since the global pandemic, arrangements for holding democratic meetings have been considered to ensure that the arrangements remain fit for purpose. As part of this, the Council introduced Microsoft Teams to support virtual meetings. All Elected Members were issued with laptops, enabling virtual meetings to be held. Each democratic meeting is recorded live and then uploaded onto the website. In future, 'Teams Live' is being considered whereby meetings will be streamed live. This development will enable the Council to embrace hybrid meetings in future and adhere to the remote meeting requirements as part of the forthcoming Local Government Bill.

The Council continues to fulfil its obligations under the Freedom of Information Act and provide information to requestors wherever possible in the interests of transparency. In addition, requests under GDPR legislation for access to information held on a person are also fulfilled in line with the legislation. Response rates for fulfilling the requirements here are reported

regularly to CLT. During the Covid-19 pandemic the ICO, who oversee the legislation, indicated that they would offer flexibility and leniency during this time to organisations.

Review of Effectiveness:

The Council strives to ensure continuous improvement in the delivery of its services through its improvement planning process and the Performance Management Framework. It has strengthened these arrangements to align them with risk management and project management as well as identifying levels of accountability.

The remit of the WCLT is to effectively support the CLT in its role of providing strategic direction to the organisation. It is a forum to disseminate information and communicate messages ensuring a one council approach as well as networking with colleagues and peers and providing personal development opportunities.

A performance management system, utilised by the whole Council is in place which incorporates the majority of the Councils business planning and performance arrangements, so that we have one place for information management and monitoring. The system works to avoid duplication and to provide a consistent approach across the Council. The system includes statutory monitoring as well as business plans, self-evaluations, equalities, risk, projects, business continuity, performance indicators and sustainable development.

The Authority's assurance arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit. The Internal Audit Service is subject to regular review by the Authority's external auditors, who place reliance on the work carried out by the section where possible. The service underwent an external quality assessment during 2016/17 that found the service to conform to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. The next external assessment is due in 2021/22.

Internal Audit Services issued 52 audit opinions during the year.

Audit Grading	No of audits
Full Assurance	20
Reasonable Assurance	24
Limited Assurance	7
No Assurance	1

There was 1 No Assurance audit grading issued during the financial year in relation to an investigation and 7 Limited Assurance audit gradings issued. The approach to financial systems audits changed during 2018/19, with a number of systems now being conducted via Control Risk Self-Assessment (CRSA), the numbers of audits using this methodology has further increase for 2019/20. The overall audit opinion on the adequacy of the internal control environment will continue to reflect Reasonable Assurance across the council. The WCLT continues to receive periodic reviews of Internal Audit findings to ensure appropriate corrective action is taken to maintain and / or improve internal controls.

The Authority received and processed 1052 Freedom of Information requests between 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020. The service responded to 88.88% (935) within the 20

working day requirement. This falls below the required level of 90% so additional resource was put into the team in February 2020 to improve this.

Recommendations for Development:

- Managers to implement the actions identified to address weaknesses highlighted by Internal Audit. Meetings are undertaken with the Wider Corporate Leadership Team, in addition to responsible Officers, and timescales are set for implementation. Managers to ensure systems for which they have responsibility have robust internal controls to further improve the integrity of the Authority's processes.
- The Anti-Fraud, Anti-Corruption and Anti-Bribery Policy will be reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

Covid 19 Pandemic

On 2nd April 2020, the Council held its AGM early owing to the ongoing global pandemic and planning for the implementation of new emergency arrangements. The AGM took place via telephone conference, a new platform for Blaenau Gwent Council. Democratic meetings had not been held in this format previously and remote attendance had also not been utilised. Although the meeting was held early to accommodate emergency decision making powers, the usual formal AGM items were also agreed such as committee membership etc. A report was approved to put in place emergency temporary Governance arrangements in that decisions may continue to be taken given that all democratic meetings were cancelled for the foreseeable future.

The Council put in place the necessary temporary emergency steps to effectively respond to the potential impact of COVID 19, and to continue to deliver critical services and protect local communities and staff. It was agreed that in respect of the exercise of Executive Functions as outlined in the Council's Constitution, for the Council to temporarily delegate power and responsibility for exercising the Executive functions (which have not been delegated by virtue of existing arrangements within the Council's Constitution) to the Managing Director (and in her absence or incapacity to any of her nominated deputies being any officer of the Corporate Leadership Team) to make decisions and undertake any actions required to ensure critical services continue to operate based on business continuity plans, in order to ensure the Council and its residents are protected.

In order to ensure there was appropriate involvement of Elected Members, an Emergency Committee of elected Members was established comprising the Leader of the council, the Leader of the Labour Group, two Independent Elected Members and one Labour Elected Member, who were consulted on decisions which fell outside of the Council's current budget or policy framework. . Any urgent decisions which are required to be taken outside the Council's current policy and budgetary framework, must be taken in accordance with the existing provisions of Paragraph 15.5 of the Council's Constitution, with the additional proviso that the Emergency Committee must be consulted prior to any such decision being taken. The full report can be found on the Council's website <http://cc-mgov-01/mgChooseDocPack.aspx?ID=2119&LLL=0>

Under the national emergency legislation, it was agreed for democratic meetings to be held remotely. Blaenau Gwent utilised Microsoft Teams in order to achieve this. A small set of decision making committees were put in place as well as informal scrutiny meetings:

- Planning, Regulatory and Licensing Committee – 25th June 2020
- Standards Committee – 14th July 2020
- PSB Meeting – 20th July 2020
- Council – 23rd July 2020
- Informal Scrutiny (Education and Learning) – 27th July 2020
- Informal Scrutiny (Community Services) – 27th July 2020
- Informal Scrutiny (Social Services) – 29th July 2020
- Informal Scrutiny (Corporate Overview) – 30th July 2020
- Informal Scrutiny (Regeneration) – 30th July 2020
- Planning, Regulatory and Licensing Committee – 30th June 2020

At the Council meeting on 23rd July 2020, it was agreed that a full democratic committee cycle would be in operation, remotely from September 2020 onwards and as a consequence the emergency arrangements were no longer needed.

As part of the remote meeting arrangements, meetings are recorded live and then uploaded onto the website following the meeting. This is fully in-line with the emergency legislation put in place. Public speakers, the Press and members of the public can attend the meeting on request, or can view the meeting via the website once the meeting has been uploaded. In future, 'Teams Live' is being considered whereby meetings will be streamed live. This development will enable the Council to embrace hybrid meetings in future and adhere to the remote meeting requirements as part of the forthcoming Local Government Bill.

Working in partnership with Welsh Government we have deployed significant resources to support businesses in the area and delivered the Welsh Government Business Support Package. So far, we have paid 1420 grants to businesses totalling £15.8m.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic we have developed an operating model in children's and adults for the Social Care Locality Teams which has been created to support the development of the locality clinical assessment centres as outlined in the Welsh Government Community Covid-19 Framework for Wales'.

We have developed a system of support for the most vulnerable and isolated members of their respective communities. This has included but not exclusively, the development of community networks via social media groups, development of volunteer services for collection of medication and food supplies, and befriending type support. This has in the main developed from within Corporate teams with support from wider partners (Leisure Trusts, Registered Social Landlords, Third Sector organisations etc.)

Each of the 5 local authorities have been provided with a list of people who the Welsh Government have identified as needing to shield themselves (issued until 2nd April 20) – further people have been defined by ABUHB primary care as 'vulnerable' and GP practices have been contracting this cohort of people to remind them that they also need to shield for 12 weeks from 1st April. To date the Local Authority have not received details of this second cohort of people / households who have not received a 'shielding letter' and therefore are

working from their own data sources – WCCIS databases etc. to identify people who may require support.

The impact of the pandemic has had significant impact on a number of Provider Services with the closure of both Augusta House Respite Centre and Community Options Day Opportunities.

The majority of staff from both of these services have been redeployed to those critical services which have continued to operate, including Home Care Domiciliary Support, Cwrt Mytton Residential Home and Supported Living Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities.

The redeployment of staff resource has been crucial in enabling the above services to maintain safe and appropriate staffing levels throughout, particularly given that each of the services has had their core staff teams depleted due to a number of factors, including individuals shielding, those identified as vulnerable, and those individuals or family members within the same household who may have developed symptoms and needed to self-isolate, pending testing and subsequent results.

The duration and ongoing closure of these services is without doubt beginning to place increasing strain on family support networks, as both services play a critical role in helping people to stay living at home and provide family members with help in their caring role. They also play an important part in preventing loneliness and social isolation.

To support those families / individuals where there is a critical risk of family breakdown, carer stress and / or impact on an individual's mental wellbeing, a small cohort of Community Options staff are operating a community outreach model of support.

Longer term recovery models for both Augusta House and Community Options are being developed reflecting current Welsh Government and Public Health Wales guidance, but plans are also very dependent on those staff returning that are currently redeployed.

The pandemic has resulted in different ways of working and delivering services. Remote installations of Technology Enable Care equipment are now taking place which supports social distancing ensuring people who require services receive them in a safe way.

The Council developed Locality Teams to provide a local response to support the citizens of Blaenau Gwent through the COVID 19 pandemic. The Locality Teams provide support and direct people to voluntary and business sectors for help with matters such as grocery shopping and collecting medication. A number of the Community Connectors from Adult Services IAA Team have been redeployed into the Locality Teams. Their knowledge of the local communities has greatly benefitted and assisted the Teams.

Working in partnership with colleagues in ABUHB, 'Attend anywhere' (a Health based communication and collaboration platform) has been introduced within the IAA Team. This enables the IAA Team to meet the GPs, patients and attend Multi-Disciplinary Teams remotely and securely.

As at July 2020 Blaenau Gwent Council have provided childcare for over 500 critical workers throughout the course of the previous 4 months, via school childcare hubs and/ or private childcare provision. 377 children accessed a key worker childcare place at a school

hub between March and July 2020. The Early years and child care team have provided significant support to child care providers during Covid which played a large part in 64% of providers remaining open throughout the crisis.

Risk assessments across all areas have been undertaken to consider the new working arrangements under Covid 19. These are considered by our Health and Safety Team and Trade Union and are available upon request.

The Council put in place a Gold Command meeting and an Emergency Response Team to respond to the requirements of keeping key services operational throughout the pandemic as well as creating new services, such as Locality Teams and a contact tracing team.

All of the Council's regulators 'stood down' throughout the initial phases of the pandemic. Audit Wales did request some learning information from the Council, however their intended 2020/2021 audit programme was temporarily put on hold.

Key policy areas such as equalities and the Welsh Language remained in place but with less scrutiny initially, however, this is now expected to run as usual. Throughout the pandemic there was a focus on the equalities agenda via the Black Lives Matter Campaign.

The Council has responded well to the pandemic and implemented emergency arrangements quickly which have operated well. No internal control or governance issues have arisen during the period.

Significant Governance Issues

We have been advised on the implications of the results of the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework, and that the arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose subject to the significant governance issues to be specifically addressed as outlined below:

Issue	Action	Responsible Officer
<p>The uncertainty around the current and future economic impact of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covid-19 • Exiting the European Union • WG financial settlements to local authorities is a cause for concern. <p>This may pose significant challenges for the Council and it will be critical for the Council to demonstrate that it has appropriate</p>	<p>Financial monitoring will continue to be undertaken and reported regularly into Scrutiny and Executive Committee via the quarterly portfolio budget forecast reports.</p> <p>For 2020/21 WG has committed additional financial support for local authorities of £300m. Monthly claims to WG are being submitted to fund the additional costs incurred by the Council in responding to Covid-19. In addition, quarterly claims</p>	Chief Officer Resources

<p>governance arrangements in place to manage its financial position.</p>	<p>are being made for income lost / deferred.</p> <p>WG are however unable to commit to any additional funding past 31 March 2021.</p> <p>Some commentators are expecting prices to increase by 4%, as a result of the UK exiting the EU without a trade deal. This will be monitored closely in coming months.</p> <p>To ensure the Council's financial resilience the Council intends to carry out a number of strategic business reviews which will focus on its core functions including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximising income • Maximising resources • Demand management • Maximising technology and data <p>Within this framework the Authority will be looking at ways to achieve savings whilst mitigating the impact on services.</p>	
<p>Uncertainty surrounding historic insurance claims.</p>	<p>In accordance with proper accounting practice, the Authority's Accounts include appropriate provisions and reserves to mitigate potential liabilities for historic claims, calculated on the basis of currently held information.</p>	<p>Corporate Leadership Team</p>
<p>Audit Wales received correspondence towards the end of its 2016/17 audit which resulted in an</p>	<p>Audit Wales continue to examine a number of matters relating to the Council's historic</p>	<p>Chief Officer Resources</p>

<p>investigation into the Council's historic relationship with its wholly owned company Silent Valley Waste Services Ltd (SVWS).</p> <p>As the investigation by Audit Wales into the issues raised has not been finalised, the Council is yet to receive an audit opinion or certificate of audit completion for the 2016/17, 2017/18 or 2018/19 accounts.</p>	<p>relationship with SVWS that will be reported on in due course. However, Audit Wales do not consider that any of the ongoing matters to be material to the Auditor General's opinion on the Council's financial statements and the audit opinion can therefore now be provided.</p> <p>The Authority's accounts for 2016/17, 2017/18 & 2018/19 will therefore be re-presented to the Council's Audit Committee on 17 November 2020.</p> <p>The Authority's Accounts have been prepared in compliance with statutory requirements, relevant accounting Codes and Standards.</p>	
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Certification of the Annual Governance Statement

In conclusion there has been positive movement for the Authority's Governance Framework during 2019/20 and the progress made against the areas for improvement identified in the 2018/19 Annual Governance Statement are shown in Appendix B.

Whilst there remain some areas that require development or further improvement, in considering the governance framework and its application as detailed in this statement, we are of the opinion that the governance arrangements in place for Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council are effective and remain fit for purpose, providing an adequate level of assurance for the Council.

(signed).....

(signed).....

Councillor Nigel Daniels

Rhian Hayden

Leader of the Council

Chief Officer Resources

November 2020

November 2020

(signed).....

Michelle Morris

Managing Director

November 2020

Audit, regulatory and inspection work reported during 2019/20

Audit Wales Well-being of Future Generations Act (wales)2015 (WFG Act) examinations (Issued May 2019)	
<i>Proposals for Improvement</i>	
Local actions developed to implement the report findings as proposals for improvement not provided in this study	
	<p>Outcome of the report</p> <p>The Council has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle in setting the step 'Flying Start, Families First, Early Years Childcare and Play ensuring preventative services target the most vulnerable families in Blaenau Gwent who do not meet the criteria for a care and support plan' but there are opportunities to further embed the five ways of working:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has a thorough understanding of the short and long-term issues and challenges but does not yet have a sustainable long-term strategy; • The Council understands the needs of families and is working with them to limit or prevent problems escalating, but preventative programmes could be used more widely across Council services; • Whilst the Step links to strategies, it remains in the ownership of Children's Social Services; • The Council needs to do more to harness the support of other directorates to support delivery; • Collaborative working is a key component of the Council's early intervention and prevention approach but is aware it has more to do; and • The Council can demonstrate some strengths in its approach to involving parents and other stakeholders; there are areas which the council could further strengthen.
Audit Wales Leisure Services (Issued May 2019)	
<i>Proposals for Improvement</i>	
Learning from the existing leisure service arrangement	
1.	<p>Ensure that learning from the current Trust arrangement is considered when establishing the new leisure services arrangement; including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that the Council's responsibilities stated within legal agreements for any outsourced services are clearly understood by officers and members;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarifying and agreeing service development expectations as well as financial targets from the outset; • Ensuring financial targets are realistic and achievable; and • Monitoring performance in a timely way so that the Council can foresee any potential poor performance or concerns over future financial sustainability of the arrangement in good time to take corrective action.
Learning that the Council can draw from the leisure service review process to inform	
2.	<p>Ensure that the Council's programme of service reviews work to realistic project scopes; including by ensuring that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timescales are realistic and achievable; • There is adequate and timely member involvement to allow for effective scrutiny; • Adequate resources are allocated to complete service reviews; • Options are well defined; and • Proposed options are fully costed with proposed timescales for implementation to support effective decision making.
Preparing for alternative delivery model(s):	
3.	Put plans in place to ensure continuity of leisure services and smooth transition to sustainable and efficient alternative delivery model(s).
Audit Wales Thematic Review – Service User Perspective: Community Engagement (Issued May 2019)	
<i>Recommendations for Improvement</i>	
Local people recognise the Council's commitment to community engagement although they are not always able to take part in a way that is effective and impactful:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local people can engage with the Council in many ways but these approaches are not always developed or made available with service users' needs in mind; • Most people said they were satisfied with the quality of the Councils' approach to community engagement when making service changes although many said they were unable to seek clarity about the question if they needed to; • There are some barriers to engagement that potentially limit local participation; and • Communication with service users tends to be time limited and subject specific. <p>Local actions developed to implement the report findings as proposals for improvement not provided in this study.</p>
Audit Wales Follow up review of corporate arrangements for safeguarding of children in Blaenau Gwent (Issued October 2019)	

Proposals for Improvement

- Corporate Safeguarding Policy: Update the structure; and include updated information from the All Wales Policy
- When adopted in April 2020, include information from the All Wales Safeguarding Procedures
- Development of a terms of reference for the Corporate Safeguarding Group (via a diagram)
- All Wales Policy App:
 - I. Request for work mobile phones to be able to receive the All Wales Policy App
 - II. Identify who needs the App
 - III. Include App on the internet, MD Message and Managers Brief
- Include Corporate Safeguarding Policy and Information on front page of Intranet and Internet highlighting everyone's responsibilities with safeguarding
- Identify a safeguarding lead for each directorate at Wider CLT and a supporting officer beneath this level
 - I. Include the Corporate Safeguarding Policy into the paperwork for contractors
 - II. Include in Contract Procedure Rules (above £25k)For both state that 'there is an expectation to follow the Corporate Safeguarding Policy' and include a requirement for a signature
- Include safeguarding in the Leadership Development Programme
- Raise the profile and importance of safeguarding in Safeguarding Week (November each year), include scenario based information and a small quiz for staff
- 7-minute Safeguarding briefing to be provided to staff for awareness raising
- Include safeguarding as a question in the bi-annual staff survey
- The Corporate Safeguarding Group to develop a diagram as part of the Corporate Safeguarding Policy to identify responsibilities and arrangements. The Corporate Safeguarding Group to develop a diagram as part of the Corporate Safeguarding Policy to identify responsibilities and arrangements
- Development of options for Scrutiny Committees going forward:
 - Broaden the remit of Corporate Overview to include corporate safeguarding; or
 - Development of a whole joint safeguarding scrutiny committee (replacing the current joint education and learning and social services safeguarding scrutiny committee)
- Development of a corporate policy for volunteers
- Include in recruitment contracts about DBS requirements
- Reminder information on DBS and renewals to be provided to contractors
- Checklist questions to be developed for contractors. This is already considered as part of procurement and commissioning strategies for contractors and agency staff. Need to ensure this references volunteers should they use them.
- Identify the contractors who would most require a DBS

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include in contract compliance meetings to discuss DBS and renewals, including monitoring safeguarding compliance • A training needs analysis needs to be undertaken to determine what level of training is required by each member of staff. A rolling training programme will then be developed on a 3 yearly basis. • Consider e-learning – what is already available from Health and Social Care Wales and Academy Wales • Categorise contractors who will need to be undertaking training – DBS/Level1/or more • Performance reporting to include DBS compliance, training, risks and issues <p>Corporate Safeguarding group has performance information</p> <p>DBS compliance is undertaken by OD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline of training – delivered strategically Education and Social Services and then plan to go to all directorates. Completion date April 2020 onwards • Approach EAS to include mandatory safeguarding as part of Governor training. To be checked annually • Discussion with Internal Audit to include safeguarding in the programme for Internal May AGM • Include the safeguarding audit information onto the relevant scrutiny forward work programme and audit forward work programme. May AGM • Linked to previous action re safeguarding into scrutiny committee – risk from all areas to be reported into this committee. For AGM and new cycle •
Audit Wales Commercialisation in Local Government (National Study) (issued October 2020)	
<i>Recommendations for Improvement</i>	
	<p>Undertaking commercialisation requires councils to have capacity, the right skills and robust agile systems to be in place. We recommend that councils use our self-evaluation tools to develop a strategy for the extent to which they want to pursue commercialisation.</p>
Audit Wales Financial Sustainability of Local Government as a result of the Covid 19 Pandemic (National Study) (issued October 2020)	
<i>Overall findings</i>	
	<p>Councils and WG have worked well together to mitigate the impact of the pandemic to date but the future sustainability of the sector is an ongoing challenge.</p>
Audit Wales Rough Sleeping in Wales – Everyone’s Problem, No One’s Responsibility (National Study) (issued July 2020)	
<i>Recommendations for Improvement</i>	

	<p>R1 Public bodies and third sector partners should ensure they use data to plan the right future services, and to put in place effective data sharing protocols to ensure they respond effectively and safely to people sleeping rough. We recommend that councils and their partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in data analytical skills to better understand the current situation and predict future demand to prevent future homelessness; • Review and update data sharing protocols to ensure they support services to deliver their data sharing responsibilities effectively; and • Introduce a single data capture and risk assessment process for to help support safe decision making in dealing with people sleeping rough • Integrated services to tackle complex needs <p>R2 Because public bodies are responding to people in crisis, they often deal with acute issues in isolation and rarely address the fundamental cause of the crisis. To do this requires public bodies to design and create service delivery models that are responsive. We recommend that public bodies use our complex needs self-reflection tool to improve how they can jointly address complex needs in the future.</p>
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Audit Wales Welsh Community Care Information System (National Study) (issued October 2020)

Recommendations for Improvement

	<p>R1 We recommend that before committing any further central funding, the welsh Government works with the WCCIS National Programme Team, health boards, local authorities and the supplier to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce an updated business case that takes account of local, regional and national costs and sets out expectations for further roll-out of the system, its use over the remainder of the contract term, the development of national data standards and planning for any successor arrangements; • Ensure the organisations involved have the necessary capacity to support implementation and are giving enough priority to the programme against a clearly agreed plan; and • Pull together a clear national picture on feedback from frontline users about the performance and general functionality of the system. <p>R2 We recommend that the Welsh Government works with the National Programme Team to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the WCCIS contract might have been strengthened to support and incentivise delivery and manage risk; and • How relevant lessons can be applied to any successor contracting arrangements and wider public procurement
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Well-being of Future Generations: An examination of ‘Improving access to, and the quality of open spaces for the benefit of our communities, businesses and visitors’ – Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (issued October 2019)

In a workshop with Audit Wales and officers from the Council the following actions were agreed:

- Long term: Develop a clearer vision within the Corporate Plan – long term 30 years
- Increase areas of managed land (woodlands / grassland / habitats)
- Engage with parents at an early stage to support a greater level of early years’ engagement
- Encourage economic ventures that will ensure management of the resource through employment and education

Prevention:

- Ensure people feel, and are able to access open spaces, e.g. through:
 - Providing the right information
 - Maps, routes etc.
 - Promotion
 - Culture and behaviour change
 - Ensuring open spaces are accessible, inclusive and safe

Integration:

- Build on the Forward Environment Plan
- Ensure all business plans recognise the step and play an active role. Section 6 duty
- Ensure there are clear goals that all organisations can buy into and work towards

Collaboration:

- Expand ‘Blaenau Gwent we want’ to capture and help understand people’s views on open and green spaces
- Develop measures around recycling levels, antisocial behaviour issues and evidence of behaviour change

Involvement:

- Collate local evidence of groups with status and increase the number of constituted community groups involved in managing Green Open Spaces

Audit Wales Environmental Health Follow-up Review (issued November 2019)

Proposals for Improvement

The Council should ensure that it has assessed the impact of withdrawing from the collaborative working arrangement with Torfaen CBC on the financial and operational sustainability of the environmental health service. It also needs to consider how to continue to respond to the Council's budget challenge and to new legislation. This may include:

- Seeking new partnership arrangements with other Authorities (ensuring that appropriate governance arrangements are in place);
- Review of existing contracts with third party providers to maximise income generation opportunities; and
- Transformation and innovation, such as use of digital intelligence to predict future patterns of service delivery and / or inform decision-making around service provision.

In reconfiguring the service, the Council should ensure that statutory powers and duties are sufficiently prioritised alongside discretionary areas.

Audit Wales Progress in implementing the Violence Against Women, domestic abuse and sexual Violence Act (National study) (issued November 2019)

Recommendations for Improvement

R1 Part 1 of the report highlights that despite public bodies having an increasing understanding of, and demand for. VAWDASV services, significant gaps remain and engagement with survivors and victims in reviewing and developing services is inconsistent. To address this, we recommend that needs assessment and mapping of service provision by public bodies are revisited and involvement widened and enhanced to include all relevant stakeholders to build a more accurate picture of current service provision and identify gaps.

R2 Part 1 of the report describes how victims and survivors of VAWDASV often find it difficult to navigate a fragmented system of service delivery. To support victims and survivors to access and use services we recommend that that public bodies:

- Produce comprehensive and relevant information in a variety of media on the full range of services available to protect and support victims and survivors; and
- Create a joint pathway to access services and support for both victims and professionals and advertise access arrangements widely.

R3 Part 2 of the report notes that whilst it is important that organisations comply with relevant data protection legislation, they also need to share

	<p>data with partners to better meet the needs of victims and survivors. We recommend that authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure staff that are likely to come in to contact with victims and survivor have appropriate VAWDASV training; • Provide refresher training to service managers to ensure they know when and what data they can and cannot share; and • Review and update data sharing protocols to ensure they support services to deliver their data sharing responsibilities. <p>R4 Part 2 of the report highlights that while some good progress has been made with regional working, there are not always appropriate levers in place to support service transformation in line with VAWDASV legislation. To ensure the benefits of regionalisation are realised, we recommend that delivery agencies (local authorities and the third sector) review their approach to regional working to better integrate services and maximise the positive impact they can make on victims and survivors.</p> <p>R5 Part3 of the report highlights that the complex and short-term funding mechanisms, lack of data and insufficient consultation with stakeholders, are not supporting sustainable commissioning of VAWDASV services. To address this, we recommend that local authorities review their commissioning arrangements to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove duplication and overlap between different approaches within the authority and with partner; • Rationalise administration arrangements to improve efficiency and value for money; • Streamline and standardise commissioning arrangements to reduce the burden of administration on all parties; and • Set appropriate performance measures, targets and benchmarks to judge the impact and outcome of commissioned services.
<p>Audit Wales The Effectiveness of Local Planning Authorities in Wales (National Study) (issued June 2019)</p>	
<p><i>Recommendations for Improvement</i></p>	
	<p>R1 Part 1 of the report sets out the complexities of the planning system showing how challenging it is for local planning authorities to effectively engage with and involve stakeholders in choices and decisions. To improve involvement with stakeholders and ownership of decisions we recommend that:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Local planning authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test current engagement and involvement practices and consider the full range of other options available to ensure involvement activities are fit for purpose;

- Use 'Place Plans' as a vehicle to engage and involve communities and citizens in planning choices and decision making; and
- Improve transparency and accountability by holding planning meetings at appropriate times, rotating meetings to take place in areas which are subject to proposed development, webcasting meetings and providing opportunities for stakeholders to address committee meetings

Welsh Government:

- Review the Development Management Procedure Order 2012 And update the engagement and involvement standards for local planning authorities.

R2 Part of the report highlights that local planning authorities have been subject to significant reductions in funding and struggle to deliver their statutory responsibilities. To improve resilience, we recommend that local planning authorities:

- Review their building control fee regimes to ensure levels set, better reflect the actual cost of providing these services and make the service self-funding; and
- Improve capacity by working regionally to:
 - Integrate services to address specialism gaps;
 - Develop joint supplementary planning guidance; and
 - Develop future local development plan regionally and in partnership with other local planning authorities

R3 Part 2 of the report highlights that the cost of development control services is not reflected in the charges set for these services and progress in developing regional responses to strengthen resilience has been slow. We recommend that the Welsh Government:

- Reviews development control fees to ensure the levels set, better reflect the actual cost of providing these services; and
- Consider how to use the powers in the Planning (Wales) Act to support and improve local planning authority capacity and resilience.

R4 Part 3 of the report summarises the effectiveness and impact of local planning authorities decision making and how well they are performing against national measures. We recommend that the local planning authorities improve the effectiveness of the planning committees by:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing their scheme of delegation to ensure planning committees are focused on the most important strategic issues relevant to their authority; • Revising reporting templates to ensure they are clear and unambiguous to help guide decision making and reduce the level of officer recommendations overturned; and • Enforcing the local planning authorities' standards of conduct for meetings. <p>R5 Part 4 of the report identifies the central role of planning to delivering the ambitions of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. We recommend that local planning authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set a clear ambitious vision that shows how planning contributes to improving wellbeing; • Provide planning committee members with regular and appropriate measures for their administration of the planning system and the impact of their planning decisions on wellbeing; and • Annually publish these performance measures to judge planning authorities impact on wellbeing.
Audit Wales Review of Public Service Boards (National Study) (issued October 2019)	
<i>Recommendations for Improvement</i>	
	<p>R1 In Part 1 of the report we set out that understanding the impact of choices and decisions requires public bodies to fully involve citizens and stakeholders and undertake comprehensive Impact Assessments. However, we found that current practice is insufficient to provide assurance that the needs of people with protected characteristics are fully considered when reviewing choices and the voice of citizens is not sufficiently influencing decisions. We recommend that PSBs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conduct formal assessments to identify the potential impact on people with protected characteristics and the Welsh language and review agreed actions to ensure any adverse impacts are addressed; • improve transparency and accountability by making PSB meetings, agendas, papers and minutes accessible and available to the public; • strengthen involvement by working to the guidance in the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales; and • feed back the outcome of involvement activity identifying where changes are made as a result of the input of citizens and stakeholders. <p>R2 In Part 2 of the report we review arrangements for PSB scrutiny and conclude that there are shortcomings and weaknesses in current performance and practice. To improve scrutiny, we recommend that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSBs and public bodies use the findings of the Auditor General for Wales' Discussion Paper: Six themes to help make scrutiny 'Fit for the Future' to review their current performance and identify where they need to

	<p>strengthen oversight arrangements and activity; and • PSBs ensure scrutiny committees have adequate engagement with a wider range of relevant stakeholders who can help hold PSBs to account.</p> <p>R3 In Part 3 of the report we summarise the difficulty of developing, implementing and resourcing PSBs and the challenges of managing multiple partnerships that can often have overlap and duplication. To help build capacity, consistency and resourcing of activity we recommend that: • PSBs take the opportunity to discharge other plan and strategy obligations through the Local Wellbeing Plan; • the Welsh Government enables PSBs to develop flexible models of working including: – merging, reducing and integrating their work with other forums such as Regional Partnership Boards; and – giving PSBs flexibility to receive, manage and spend grant monies subject to PSBs ensuring they have adequate safeguards and appropriate systems in place for management of funding; effective budget and grant programme controls; and public reporting, scrutiny and oversight systems to manage expenditure.</p> <p>R4 To help build capacity, consistency and resourcing of activity we recommend that the Welsh Government and Welsh Local Government Association in their review of strategic partnerships take account of, and explore, the findings of this review.</p>
<p>Audit Wales Supporting Financial Resilience Follow-up Review – Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (issued August 2020)</p>	
<p><i>Report findings:</i></p>	
	<p>The Council has responded positively to the findings of our report: it is making progress against the proposals for improvement and has future work planned to fully address them.</p>
<p>Audit Wales Integrated Care Fund – Greater Gwent Regional Partnership Board (issued September 2019)</p>	
<p><i>Report findings:</i></p>	
	<p>Our national report has identified that the fund has helped to bring organisations together to plan and provide services</p>
<p>Audit Wales Financial Sustainability Assessment – Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (issued February 2020)</p>	
<p><i>Report findings:</i></p>	
	<p>Despite a history of service overspending, the Council has recently taken steps to increase the level of useable reserves and is developing a more sustainable financial strategy</p>

Audit Wales The 'Front Door' to Adult Social Care (National Study) (issued September 2019)

Recommendations for Improvement

Improving access to the front door R1 Part 1 of the report sets out how authorities promote access to the 'front door' and provide information, advice and assistance to help people to improve their wellbeing and prevent their needs from deteriorating. To improve awareness of the front door we recommend that:

Local Authorities:

- Review their current approaches, consider their audience, and ensure that good-quality information is made available in a timely manner to avoid needs deteriorating and people presenting for assistance in 'crisis';
- Work in partnership with public and third sector partners to help ensure people accessing via partner referrals, or other avenues, are given the best information to help them;
- Ensure that advocacy services are commissioned and proactively offered to those who need them at first point of contact; and
- To take local ownership and lead on the co-ordination and editing of local information published on Dewis Cymru locally.

The Welsh Government:

- Improve carers' awareness and understanding of their rights to be assessed for their own care and support needs, aimed at generating demand for local authorities' preventative services; and
- Undertake a full evaluation of the role of Dewis Cymru in the wider implementation of the act and use the data gained to build on its potential as a national information sharing portal.

Investing in prevention and understanding impact R2 art2 of the report highlights weaknesses in authorities' assurance of the availability and quality of third-sector, preventative, community based services that they signpost people to. We recommend that:

Local Authorities:

- Map the availability of preventative services in their area to better understand the current levels of provision and identify gaps and duplication;
- Involve third-sector partners in co-producing preventative solutions to meet peoples' needs and ensure people have equitable access to services;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with third-sector partners to tailor and commission new services where gaps are identified; and• Work with partners to improve data to evaluate the impact of preventative services on individuals and the population more generally. <p>Welsh Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve the cost evaluation in relation to their impact of the Act in a national context, and support local authorities to ensure that the desired impact of prevention on overall social-care expenditure becomes a demonstrable reality.
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Details of progress against these proposals can be obtained from the Governance and Partnerships Department.

Appendix B

Recommendation for Improvement made in the 2018/19 Annual Governance Statement	Action Undertaken during 2019/20	Further Action Required
Core Principle A – Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.		
Continued adherence to the Authority's policies and procedures which exist to guide Members and Officers to comply with the Council's expectations in terms of acting with integrity.	A risk based audit plan was operated for 2019/20 which included examination of the Authority's policies and procedures.	
To evidence robust application of the Authority's Code of Conduct, an Internal Audit review of the declarations of interest process will be undertaken	An audit of the Code of Conduct was not conducted during 2019/20. The item was deferred.	Code of Conduct audit to be included on future audit plans.
In line with good practice, an annual review (as a minimum) of the Constitution and Scheme of delegation to ensure the Authority's governance and decision making processes remain fit for purpose	Emergency measures were put on place as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.	
Approval by Council of the reviewed Whistleblowing Policy	The Whistle blowing policy is the subject of an ongoing review	
Continued application of the Members Performance Development Review scheme and competency framework review following the AGM in May 2019 and the Senior Salary holders will be reviewed in late 2019.	The PDRs took place last year and are scheduled for November this year. The sessions for SRA holders will be facilitated externally. Following this, the non SRA holders will be provided with the opportunity to undertake a PDR.	
Continued application of the Officers Performance Review Scheme.	The Officer Performance Review Scheme has been applied throughout 2019/20.	
The audit plan for 2019/20 will include testing a range of policies and procedures.	The 2019/20 audit plan included a range of policy and procedure audits.	Future audit plans will continue to include a range of policy and procedure audits.
Core Principle B – Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.		
Further work to be undertaken linked to the	Report considered by Corporate Overview and	Audit Wales

Audit Wales Levers of Change and service User Perspective review.	Audit Committee in September 2019. Proposals for improvement included within the engagement team business plan.	
Evaluate the findings of the staff survey conducted during January 2019 and implement change.	The results of the staff survey have been analysed and a set of high level actions were agreed.	Implementation of the actions arising from the staff survey.
Monitor progress of the Local Well-Being Plan.	In early 2020 a performance management framework was approved for SSG and PSB to formalise reporting and monitoring arrangements of the Well-being Plan.	
Continued implementation of the Council's Engagement Programme as part of the Engagement Strategy.	The engagement programme has been reviewed to consider the impacts of the pandemic. Arrangements moving forward have been agreed by CLT.	
Core Principle C – Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.		
Continued implementation and mainstreaming of the Welsh Language standards across all areas of Blaenau Gwent.	This is ongoing and updates included within the annual report.	
Continue to support the collective and individual body duties under the Well-being of Future Generations Act.	This is ongoing for the Council and PSB. Progress is included in the Assessment of Performance and work of the PSB.	
Annual review of the Corporate Plan	This has been undertaken this year and resulted in a change to the well-being objectives.	
Core Principle D – Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of intended outcomes.		
Review of the Performance Management Framework to ensure alignment with the Corporate Plan.	The framework has been reviewed but needs to be agreed through CLT – delay owing to priorities regarding the pandemic.	
Review of the self-evaluation process.	The Council has decided to adopt the self-assessment process from the Well-being of Future Generations Commissioner.	

Core Principle E – Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.		
Conclude phase 2 of the Senior Management Review.	The Senior Management review was completed in 2019.	
Production of job descriptions and person specifications for the roles of chair and Vice-Chair of the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee.	This has been completed and included in the Council’s Constitution.	
Analyse the findings of the staff survey and implement required actions.	The results of the staff survey have been analysed and a set of high level actions were agreed.	Implementation of the actions arising from the staff survey.
Core Principle F – Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management		
To assess and demonstrate its compliance with the Local Government Measure and the aims and objectives of the Council, the annual report of the audit committee will be produced summarising the 2018/19 year’s activity and evidencing their responsibilities as part of the governance arrangements.	Information was gathered for this report, but was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.	The report for 2019/20 will be produced during 2020/21.
Regular review of Risk Management arrangements to ensure they remain fit for purpose and are implemented consistently.	Review of the Risk Management Strategy was planned for March 2020, but was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Corporate Risk Register has continued to be managed by CLT.	
As part of the Authority’s ongoing commitment to managing its risks, the anti-fraud, anti-corruption and anti-bribery policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate	The Anti-Fraud, Anti-Corruption and Anti-Bribery Policy was not reviewed during the period	The Anti-Fraud, Anti-Corruption and Anti-Bribery Policy will be reviewed during 2020/21.
Continued inclusion of key governance systems in the internal audit plan to ensure key elements of the governance framework are prioritised and examined annually	A number of key governance systems were audited during 2018/19 and findings reported to the appropriate service areas for action.	The risk based audit plan for 2019/20 has prioritised a number of key governance systems for audit during 2019/20.
Core Principle G – Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit, to deliver effective accountability		

<p>Managers to implement the actions identified to address weaknesses highlighted by Internal Audit. Meetings are undertaken with the Wider Corporate Leadership Team, in addition to responsible Officers, and timescales are set for implementation. Managers to ensure systems for which they have responsibility have robust internal controls to further improve the integrity of the Authority's processes.</p>	<p>Internal audit reports have been subject to follow up review where they are graded Limited Assurance or No Assurance</p>	
<p>The Anti-Fraud, Anti-Corruption and Anti-Bribery Policy will be reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose.</p>	<p>The Anti-Fraud, Anti-Corruption and Anti-Bribery Policy was not reviewed during the period.</p>	<p>The Anti-Fraud, Anti-Corruption and Anti-Bribery Policy will be reviewed during 2020/21.</p>
<p>CLT to consider a scoping exercise for webcasting meetings linked to the implementation of Office 365.</p>	<p>As part of the remote meeting arrangements, meetings are recorded live and then uploaded onto the website following the meeting. This is fully in line with the emergency legislation put in place. Public speakers, the Press and members of the public can attend the meeting on request, or can view the meeting via the website once the meeting has been uploaded. In future, 'Teams Live' is being considered whereby meetings will be streamed live. This development will enable the Council to embrace hybrid meetings in future and adhere to the remote meeting requirements as part of the forthcoming Local Government Bill.</p>	