

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2019-20

Core Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law		
Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
A1: <i>Behaving with integrity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring members and officers behave with integrity and lead a culture where acting in the public interest is visibly and consistently demonstrated thereby protecting the reputation of the organisation. Ensuring members take the lead in establishing specific standard operating principles or values for the organisation and its staff and that they are communicated and understood. These should build on the Seven Principles of Public Life (the <i>Nolan Principles</i>). Leading by example and using the above standard operating principles or values as a framework for decision making and other actions. Demonstrating, communicating and embedding the standard operating principles or values through appropriate policies and processes which are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are operating effectively. 	<p>To effectively communicate the council's vision and principles, the Corporate Plan is distributed via the council's website, supported by quarterly updates on performance published via <i>Your Borough</i>. The Summer edition of <i>Your Borough</i> was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>A Code of Conduct for Employees is in place and is communicated to all officers via the NETconsent system on commencement of their role, with regular updates issued for compliance purposes. For those without system access, Managers are responsible for ensuring their staff are aware of, and have signed up to, the relevant policies of the council.</p> <p>The council has a Standards Committee in place to reflect the changes to the standards regime brought about by the Localism Act. The Committee met in August 2019 and considered the recommendations of the <i>Review of Local Government Ethical Standards</i> prepared by the parliamentary Committee on Standards in Public Life. A key action from this report is the review of relevant codes and the LGA has committed to consulting on a new draft Members' Code of Conduct. The findings of this work in 2020-21 potentially represent a key milestone in the council's governance environment and will inevitably require a review of the council's existing code with the potential for amendments to the Constitution.</p> <p>The existing Code for Members sets out expected standards of behaviour. As such, the council's website provides details of the Corporate Complaints Procedure and directs any persons with a complaint regarding a Councillor to the council's Monitoring Officer.</p> <p>The council's 'Register of Interests' applies to both officers and Members and requires that declarations must be made for any item in which they may have, or may be perceived to have, an interest that may influence their decision making ability. The council also has in place a Gifts and Hospitality register which is updated and distributed.</p> <p>The Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and Whistleblowing Policy are both available on the council's website and in 2019-20 were distributed to officers via the NETconsent system, and through the manual sign-up process for officers without IT access.</p> <p>The council's Corporate Customer Service Charter establishes standards expected of officers. It also sets out how the council will address reports of service failures and complaints from members of the public. The council's website hosts specific details of the Corporate Complaints Procedure alongside details of the Local Government Ombudsman. Feedback is used to share improvement and good practice across departments. The Local Government Ombudsman's annual report is considered by the Finance and Audit Committee.</p>

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Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p>A2: <i>Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking to establish, monitor and maintain the organisation's ethical standards and performance. • Underpinning personal behaviour with ethical values and ensuring they permeate all aspects of the organisation's culture and operation. • Developing and maintaining robust policies and procedures which place emphasis on agreed ethical values. • Ensuring that external providers of services on behalf of the organisation are required to act with integrity and in compliance with ethical standards expected by the organisation. 	<p>Throughout 2019-20 all committee reports have been drafted and decisions made with explicit consideration of professional advice relating to; financial implications, delivery of the Corporate Plan objectives and, equally, a series of ethical considerations; legal and data protection implications, Section 17 of the Crime & Disorder Act, Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 and Section 43 of the Care Act 2014 (Safeguarding) and Equalities Act provisions.</p> <p>As part of the overarching Member training programme, a series of ethical awareness training sessions were delivered in 2019-20;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying Awareness; • Code of Conduct; • Equalities and Cohesion; and • Fraud Awareness. <p>At an officer level, the council has built the requirement for the promotion of ethical standards into its performance and retention processes. The council's recruitment policy and job description material makes clear the importance of adhering to expected ethical standards. Equally, the appraisal process sets out a requirement for managers to evidence their compliance with the equality agenda, further embedding this within the culture of the authority.</p> <p>The council has an effective Corporate Procurement Strategy that acts as the foundation on which the authority's approach to procurement is based. Related to this, the council's contract process terms and conditions emphasise the requirement for providers to deliver contracted services on behalf of the council in line with ethical standards as determined by legislation.</p> <p>The council has in place a robust Working in Partnership Framework which is the central point of reference in developing new partnerships, linking the formation of new partnership working opportunities to the delivery of the council's Corporate Plan objectives. Recently refreshed to account for the inclusion of the safeguarding and shared service agendas alongside other amendments, the framework outlines a procedure for managing partnerships and includes a pledge in 'Maintaining Ethical Standards'. This sets out expectations of Members, officers and partners in terms of working in partnership and specifically a commitment to "<i>maintaining high ethical standards in the conduct of the partnership's business, including the promotion of equality and respect for all sections of the community</i>".</p>

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Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p style="text-align: center;">A3: <i>Respecting the rule of law</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring members and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of the law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations. • Creating the conditions to ensure that the statutory officers, other key post holders, and members, are able to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements. • Striving to optimise the use of the full powers available for the benefit of citizens, communities and other stakeholders. • Dealing with breaches of legal and regulatory provisions effectively. • Ensuring corruption and misuse of power are dealt with effectively. 	<p>The council's Constitution sets out the roles and responsibilities of the Executive. The Constitution is periodically reviewed, updated and re-issued to ensure that it remains up to date and reflective of the council's governance structure. Confirmation of the arrangements in respect of the Cabinet was published at Annual Council in May 2019. Annex 1 of the Constitution sets out the roles and responsibilities of the other Members.</p> <p>Complimenting Members arrangements, the council's transparency webpages include specific information relating to the council's Corporate Management Team. The information presents a clear outline of the roles and responsibilities of the council's Chief Executive, Directors and Service Managers supported by information relating to salary provision.</p> <p>The council's Constitution (Annex 1 - Section 1.12 – Proper Officers & Section 1.13 - Functions delegated to officers of the council) sets out the responsibilities of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Executive: a full-time appointment who is also the Head of Paid Service. The Chief Executive Officer has completed a specific assurance statement to demonstrate how their role has effectively been executed during 2019-20. • Section 151 Officer: the s151 officer is the Director (Corporate Services) and the Deputy Section 151 Officer is the Assistant Director (Corporate Services). The Section 151 Officer has completed a specific 'Chief Financial Officer' assurance statement which sets out how the council has complied with the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government in 2019-20, as well as how the council has met its Section 151 obligations as outlined within the Constitution. • Monitoring Officer: The Monitoring Officer has completed a specific assurance statement to demonstrate how their role has properly been discharged during 2019-20. The role is undertaken by the Chief Legal Officer for Medway Council under the terms of the shared Legal Service between the authorities. <p>The Chief Executive and the s151 officer are permanent members of the council's Management Team, with the Monitoring Officer represented by Head of Legal Services. Through these positions, they are able to provide financial and legal advice, in line with statutory requirements, in all decisions taken by the council's Management.</p> <p>The Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and Whistleblowing Policy are both available on the council's website and in 2019-20 were distributed to officers via the NETconsent system, and through the manual sign-up process for officers without IT access.</p>

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Core Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement		
Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
B1: Openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring an open culture through demonstrating, documenting and communicating the organisation's commitment to openness. Making decisions that are open about actions, plans, resource use, forecasts, outputs and outcomes. The presumption is for openness. If that is not the case, a justification for the reasoning for keeping a decision confidential should be provided. Providing clear reasoning and evidence for decisions in both public records and explanations to stakeholders and being explicit about the criteria, rationale and considerations used. In due course, ensuring that the impact and consequences of those decisions are clear. Using formal and informal consultation and engagement to determine the most appropriate and effective interventions/ courses of action. 	<p>The council's website forms a key tool in delivering the authority's commitment to openness and transparency in how it conducts its business. The website is set out in a clear and easily accessible way, using infographics and plain language. Information residents use most, such as Council Tax, and Waste and Recycling can be accessed quickly and easily from the main page.</p> <p>To effectively communicate the council's vision and principles, the Corporate Plan is made available to all staff and residents via the council's website. On a quarterly basis formal performance reports are presented to the appropriate Cabinet Committee enabling scrutiny in the performance of the council's key frontline services. This is supported by quarterly publications of the council's performance via <i>Your Borough</i> and the council's website. Completing the reporting cycle, the council also reports details of the year-end outturns for the Performance Management Framework (PMF) in its Annual Performance Report.</p> <p>In addition, the council continues to be committed to the government's transparency agenda. A specific section of the council's website has been created in order to enable the publication of a number of key data sets and formal reports including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior Staff Salaries & Organisation chart; Procurement and contracts data; Civic Budget Book and Financial Statements; and Member Allowances. <p>The council's Constitution sets out the rules and protocols associated with decision making at an executive level, including those classified as 'key decisions'. In preparing reports for a decision, all have been drafted with explicit consideration of professional advice relating to; financial implications, delivery of the Corporate Plan objectives and, equally, a series of ethical considerations; legal impact, data protection, Section 17 of the Crime & Disorder Act, Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 and Section 43 of the Care Act 2014 (Safeguarding) and Equalities Act provisions. All decisions are captured within the minutes of a committee meeting and are published, along with any key decisions, to the Committee section of the website.</p> <p>In determining policy direction, the council considers not only the needs of local residents but actively consults to identify local service demand. The council's arrangements for community consultation and how that feeds into local policy development is set out in this review document at B3: <i>Engaging with individual citizens and service users effectively</i> to this review document.</p>

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Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p>B2: <i>Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectively engaging with institutional stakeholders to ensure that the purpose, objectives and intended outcomes for each stakeholder relationship are clear so that outcomes are achieved successfully and sustainably. • Developing formal and informal partnerships to allow for resources to be used more efficiently and outcomes achieved more effectively. • Ensuring that partnerships are based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Trust; ○ a shared commitment to change; ○ a culture that promotes and accepts challenge among partners; and ○ that the added value of partnership working is explicit. 	<p>The council has in place a clear statement of the organisation's purpose and its vision for the borough which underpin the council's approach to stakeholder engagement.</p> <p>The council's adopted Local Plan sets out the strategic vision for the development of the borough to 2028 across housing needs, commercial, public and private development, including transport infrastructure, along with protection for the local environment.</p> <p>To work towards this vision and ultimately deliver relevant outcomes for local residents, the council's Corporate Plan 2019-23 sets out three clear strategic objectives, each supported by a series of policy commitments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>People;</i> • <i>Place; and</i> • <i>Progress.</i> <p>In developing the new plan, the council undertook a 12 week public consultation that saw over 800 Gravesham residents, businesses and community groups provide over 2,500 individual pieces of information and intelligence relating to community requests for council provision and priority intervention. The exercise also enabled participants the opportunity to rank each of the council's key services in terms of their individual level of perceived importance.</p> <p>The information obtained from this process was collated and analysed and acted as a sound baseline throughout the development of the policy commitments in the Corporate Plan.</p> <p>The work delivered against these objectives is measured both by qualitative and quantitative analysis, with quarterly performance updates published via <i>Your Borough</i> and the council's website.</p> <p>The council has in place a robust Working in Partnership Framework which is the central point of reference in developing new partnerships for the council, linking the formation of new partnership working opportunities to the objectives of the council's Corporate Plan.</p> <p>The governance of the council's partnership working arrangements, including those of the council's established shared services, are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they are robust and maintain the same commitment towards the corporate objectives. Collectively these arrangements form the Corporate Register of Partnerships.</p>

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Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p>B3: <i>Engaging with individual citizens and service users effectively</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing a clear policy on the type of issues that the organisation will meaningfully consult with or involve communities, citizens, service users and other stakeholders to ensure that service provision is contributing to the achievement of intended outcomes. • Ensuring that communication methods are effective and that members and officers are clear about their roles in engagement. • Encouraging, collecting and evaluating the views and experiences of communities, citizens, service users and organisations of different backgrounds including reference to future needs. • Implementing effective feedback mechanisms in order to demonstrate how views have been taken into account. • Balancing feedback from more active stakeholder groups with other stakeholder groups to ensure inclusivity. • Taking account of the impact of decisions on future generations of tax payers and service users. 	<p>To effectively communicate and engage with local residents, the council has a number of diverse community engagement initiatives. Each engagement forum has been established with a view to enabling local residents' effective, informed and timely opportunities to help shape council policy and, equally, to enable the council to communicate key announcements and policy decisions. A selection of the council's established community forums are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Gravesham Youth Council; ○ Residents' Associations; and ○ Gravesham Business Network <p>Alongside the opportunities presented through the established forums, the council provide various consultation opportunities through its website enabling the community to help shape service provision. In 2019-20 formal consultations included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Community Safety Opinion</i>; ○ <i>Milton Place Development</i>; ○ <i>Business Ratepayers Budget</i>; and ○ <i>Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations Review</i>. <p>To promote transparency and wider engagement with council decisions, residents can use Social Media, such as; Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, as well as YouTube to get updates from, and interact with, the council.</p> <p>NOTE: Through the findings of the LGA Peer Challenge in 2019, it is acknowledged that more activity can be undertaken to both promote Gravesham as a place and, equally, to collect the views of service users to inform policy development. To provide a framework to how we communicate and engage with our residents, through readily accessible channels, a refreshed Communications and Engagement Strategy in 2020-21 will form an AGS recommendation.</p> <p>NOTE: Engagement with local residents through the Covid-19 pandemic will be a key feature of a planned Covid-19 council review. Looking across the overall council response, the preservation of its frontline community offer, the considerations of community engagement and other key themes, a formal review planned for 2020-21 will form a core AGS recommendation.</p> <p>The role of Members in promoting consultation and responding to public feedback is vital. The council's Constitution sets out the importance of Members acting as 'Community Representatives'. The Constitution also presents guidelines for public petitions and how they are to be administered, both in terms of their requirements and how the council would respond, including Full Council debate.</p>

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Core Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.		
Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
C1: <i>Defining outcomes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a clear vision which is an agreed formal statement of the organisation’s purpose and intended outcomes, containing appropriate performance indicators, which provide the basis for the organisation’s overall strategy, planning and other decisions. • Specifying the intended impact on, or changes for, stakeholders including citizens and service users. It could be immediately or over the course of a year or longer. • Delivering defined outcomes on a sustainable basis within the resources that will be available. • Identifying and managing risks to the achievement of outcomes. • Managing service users’ expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available. 	<p>The council has in place a clear statement of the organisation’s purpose and its vision for the borough.</p> <p>The council’s adopted Local Plan sets out the strategic vision for the development of the borough to 2028 across housing needs, commercial, public and private development, including transport infrastructure, along with protection for the local environment.</p> <p>To work towards this vision and ultimately deliver relevant outcomes for local residents, in October 2019 Council adopted a new Corporate Plan 2019-23. The plan established three clear strategic objectives each supported by a series of policy commitments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>People;</i> • <i>Place; and</i> • <i>Progress.</i> <p>To effectively communicate the council’s Corporate Plan, the document is made available to all staff and residents via the council’s website. This is complimented internally with a ‘lite’ or summary version being made available to all staff for easy access.</p> <p>This is supported by quarterly publications of the council’s performance via <i>Your Borough</i> and the council’s website. Completing the reporting cycle, the council also reports details of the year-end outturns for the PMF in its Annual Performance Report. Qualitative and quantitate performance reporting gives Members and service users access to timely and accurate information about service delivery, supporting intervention to address any barriers to good performance. In delivering the new Corporate Plan, 2019-20 also saw the adoption of the council’s PMF with a focus on representing all service areas within the authority and commitment to reported indicators against each policy commitment. 2019-20 also saw a new suite of management indicators, designed to monitor the impact of Covid-19 on critical services.</p> <p>More broadly, the council’s annual business planning process specifically links in the activities of the individual departments, and ultimately those of individual officers, with the corporate objectives of the council providing a ‘golden thread’; an understanding of how each officer contributes to the delivery of the council’s vision.</p> <p>A key element to the business planning process is the ability to define clear performance indicators for individual service objectives, coupled with a specific risk assessment to identify the potential risks to services achieving their objectives and the actions to mitigate risk.</p>

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Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p style="text-align: center;">C2: <i>Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering and balancing the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies and plans when taking decisions about service provision. • Taking a longer-term view with regard to decision making, taking account of risk and acting transparently where there are potential conflicts between the organisation’s intended outcomes and short-term factors such as the political cycle or financial constraints. • Determining the wider public interest associated with balancing conflicting interests between achieving the various economic, social and environmental benefits, through consultation where possible, in order to ensure appropriate trade-offs. • Ensuring fair access to services. 	<p>In order to enable Members to have the knowledge base with which to carry out effective decision making and scrutiny, an annual training and development plan is delivered. This was especially important in 2019-20 given the large number of new Members to the council following the local elections in May 2019. A mixture of statutory, formal and awareness/ educational sessions, the comprehensive programme is tailored to meet all needs.</p> <p>In support of its adopted Corporate Plan objective #3: <i>Progress</i>, the council has continued in its comprehensive ‘Service Review’ programme. The aim of the programme is to review each of the council’s services in order to determine if they are being delivered in the most efficient way and to investigate potential income generating and commercial opportunities, whilst continuing to ensure services meet legislative requirements in terms of wider social, environmental and economic considerations. A key part of the council’s ‘<i>Bridging the Gap</i>’ strategy, the findings from the programme of reviews will have a significant bearing on the shape of services in future years, with the process of securing value for money for local residents at the forefront of any decisions.</p> <p>Alongside the work in ‘<i>Bridging the Gap</i>’, the council’s Capital Programme and Use of Capital Receipts Strategy are formulated to support the delivery of the council’s objectives, as set out in the Corporate Plan. Each is influenced by needs identified by service Business Plans as well as opportunities arising from government initiatives and partner agencies. Both elements form part of the financial controls evident in the council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy.</p> <p>As part of its business planning process, the council sets out how it will work towards its agreed Equality Objectives. When required, Equality Impact Assessments are carried out to assess the impact of proposals which may have an effect on different individuals and communities across the borough. In a similar vein, the data protection agenda is embedded into all committee reports. As such, where decisions are to be taken by the authority consideration is to be given to data implications and the need to assess against legislative requirements.</p> <p>In order to ensure fair access to services, the council has in place a Customer Service and Access Strategy. The strategy, complimented by the Accessibility for All procedure, provides a commitment for the council to; “<i>work with our community and service users to understand the longer-term vision and aims for how services will be accessed and will ensure improvements through mechanisms such as the website and contact centre.</i>”</p>

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Core Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes		
Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p>D1: <i>Determining interventions</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring decision makers receive objective and rigorous analysis of a variety of options indicating how intended outcomes would be achieved and associated risks. Therefore ensuring best value is achieved however services are provided. Considering feedback from citizens and service users when making decisions about service improvements or where services are no longer required in order to prioritise competing demands within limited resources available including people, skills, land and assets and bearing in mind future impacts. 	<p>Decision makers receive accurate, relevant and timely performance and intelligence to support them with objective and rigorous analysis of options, covering intended outcomes, financial impact and associated risks informing efficient service delivery. This can take the form of regular performance reporting, or bespoke reports. As an example, performance reporting gives Members and service users access to timely and accurate information about service delivery, supporting intervention to address any barriers to good performance and equally ensures value for money is a key consideration of any decision taken by the council.</p> <p>The process of decision making and delegation to officers is detailed in the Constitution, with details of what decisions are taken in this way included in the Scheme of Delegation.</p> <p>Decisions by committees are recorded through committee minutes and are published on the council's website. This is complimented by the publication of key decisions as determined.</p> <p>In determining policy direction, the council considers not only the needs of local residents and service users but actively consults to identify local service demand. In 2019-20 a series of formal consultations were undertaken that were fully considered as part of the end policy decisions.</p>

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Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p style="text-align: center;">D2: <i>Planning interventions</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing and implementing robust planning and control cycles that cover strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets. • Engaging with internal and external stakeholders in determining how services and other courses of action should be planned and delivered. • Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively, including shared risks. • Ensuring arrangements are flexible and agile so that the mechanisms for delivering goods and services can be adapted to changing circumstances. • Establishing appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs) as part of the planning process in order to identify how the performance of services and projects is to be measured. • Ensuring capacity exists to generate information required to review service quality regularly. 	<p>An effective PMF is vital to the success of any organisation in delivering consistently high quality services to local residents. The Corporate Plan, designed in consideration of community need and consultation, presented a new PMF allowing the council to evaluate if it is effectively achieving against the stated corporate objectives. For residents it provides genuine accountability in how successfully the council is administering its resources.</p> <p>The Cabinet drives the successful implementation of the Corporate Plan, with responsibility for working with and holding council officers to account in the delivery of the three strategic objectives. The council recognises that it cannot achieve its vision for the borough on its own and is increasingly working with partners to achieve these objectives.</p> <p>Formal performance reporting takes place at different times and to different audiences in order to ensure fully informed decision making:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quarterly: Performance reports of all tiers of indicators to Corporate Management Team (CMT). Subsequently reported to Cabinet and individual Cabinet Committees for consideration and scrutiny, prior to publishing on the council's digital services and <i>Your Borough</i>. - Yearly: Annual performance report to Cabinet against all performance indicators, including an outline of all relevant achievements directly contributing to the council's corporate objectives. <p>Timely and accurate reporting of qualitative and quantitative analysis enables early intervention strategies to be implemented in areas of poor performance or increased risk to service delivery.</p> <p>In order to embed performance benchmarking activity, all indicators, wherever possible, are compared to other authorities enabling the council to better understand its own levels of performance and where any good practice can be identified to feed into the next year's business planning process.</p> <p>More broadly, the council's business planning process specifically links in the activities of the individual departments, and ultimately those of individual officers, with the corporate objectives of the council providing a 'golden thread'; an understanding of how each officer contributes to the delivery of the council's vision. Each business plan also puts in place service level (or management) indicators to monitor the delivery of priorities at an operational level that fall outside the corporate reporting process. Business Plans are monitored in-year with management indicators reported quarterly to the CMT in order to identify relevant intervention.</p>

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Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p>D2: <i>Planning interventions</i> <i>[cont.]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing budgets in accordance with objectives, strategies and the medium term financial plan. • Informing medium and long term resource planning by drawing up realistic estimates of revenue and capital expenditure aimed at developing a sustainable funding strategy. 	<p>Evaluation and planning arrangements also extend to external stakeholders. The council has in place a robust Working in Partnership Framework which is the central point of reference in developing new partnerships for the council, linking the formation of new partnership working opportunities to the corporate objectives of the council's Corporate Plan.</p> <p>The framework outlines a procedure to evaluate a proposed partnership, which should attempt to draw up a list of the likely benefits, costs, risks and any potential equalities or safeguarding issues that the partnership may raise and, if possible, to quantify them, or at least describe them clearly.</p> <p>Underpinning all plans and partnerships is the council's commitment to sound financial planning. The council operates within a strict financial and regulatory environment. The council's financial planning arrangements ensure that finances remain sustainable and robust, and that both revenue and capital resources are aligned with the key policy objectives. This future planning, aimed at resourcing the achievement of core objectives, is evidenced through the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.</p> <p>The council introduced a new Medium Term Financial Strategy in 2019-20. Given the impending Government Spending Review and decisions being taken on a number of other local government funding reforms that are planned for introduction from April 2021, and the significant uncertainty regarding the potential impacts on the economy post-Brexit, it was considered prudent and most effective by Council to put in place a one year Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2020-21. The core principles underlying the new strategy are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To maintain the financial sustainability of the council;</i> • <i>To ensure sound and robust financial management arrangements; and</i> • <i>To support the delivery of quality services and activity which has a positive impact of the lives of local residents.</i> <p>Gravesham Borough Council has a strong track record in managing its financial resources. The actions of the council are subject to internal review by the council's Management Team and Elected Members, as well as external review from the residents of Gravesham and Grant Thornton, the council's External Auditor, who in 2019-20 concluded in their annual audit of the Statement of Accounts for 2018-19 that: "<i>the council had proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.</i>"</p>

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Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p>D3: <i>Optimising achievement of intended outcomes</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring the medium term financial strategy integrates and balances service priorities, affordability and other resource constraints. Ensuring the budgeting process is all-inclusive, taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term. Ensuring the medium term financial strategy sets the context for on-going decisions on significant delivery issues or responses to changes in the external environment that may arise during the budgetary period in order for outcomes to be achieved while optimising resource usage. Ensuring the achievement of 'social value' through service planning and commissioning. 	<p>In the spirit of the principles and standards within CIPFA's Financial Management Code, underpinning all plans and partnerships is the council's commitment to sound financial planning. The council operates within a strict financial and regulatory environment. The council's financial planning arrangements ensure that finances remain sustainable and robust, and that both revenue and capital resources are aligned with the key policy objectives. This future planning, aimed at resourcing the achievement of core objectives, is evidenced through the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. The core principles underlying the MTFS are outlined at D2: <i>Planning interventions</i>.</p> <p>In setting out the financial context facing the council, the MTFS identifies the pressure the General Fund is facing over the period. To bridge the resourcing gap which has been identified, the MTFS has put in place a number of strategies to ensure that it is able to optimise income generation, be innovative in the delivery of services and ensure that resources are appropriately focused on the needs and aspirations for the borough. As part of its plans to diversify its income stream and secure quality services for local residents, in 2019-20 the council established its first Local Authority Trading Company enabling it to provide commercial services to the public and local businesses with profits helping fund frontline services.</p> <p>Evidencing the successful approach to financial management, the External Auditors for the council conducted an annual audit of the council's Statement of Accounts, with their findings published and reported to the Finance & Audit Committee.</p> <p>The council has an effective Corporate Procurement Strategy which acts as the foundation on which the authority's approach to procurement is based. Related to this, the council's contract process terms and conditions emphasise the requirement for providers to deliver contracted services on behalf of the council in line with ethical standards expected by government legislation. In regards to 'social value', as part of its procurement strategy, the council has committed to;</p> <p><i>"Ensure all tenders include consideration of the social value act to encourage opportunities for local employment, local supply chain, apprenticeships and reduced carbon emissions."</i></p>

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Core Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it		
Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p>E1: <i>Developing the entity's capacity</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing operations, performance and use of assets on a regular basis to ensure their continuing effectiveness. • Improving resource use through appropriate application of techniques such as benchmarking and other options in order to determine how resources are allocated so that defined outcomes are achieved effectively and efficiently. • Recognising the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved. • Developing and maintaining an effective workforce plan to enhance the strategic allocation of resources. 	<p>The council has a number of mechanisms in place with which to ensure its continued development, ranging from an Asset Management Plan through to a Workforce Development Plan. These controls are in place to improve use of resources now and into the future.</p> <p>One such example, and in support of the council's adopted Corporate Plan objective #3: <i>Progress</i>, is the council's 'Service Review' programme. The aim of the programme is to review each of the council's services in order to determine if the services are being delivered in the most efficient way and to investigate potential income generating and commercial opportunities.</p> <p>A key component of this programme has been to put in place a benchmarking process whereby the council compares itself on both core output performance and on a financial expenditure basis against a suite of similar authorities, identified via the 'nearest neighbour' CIPFA tool, with the results shared with the council's Management Team. A key part of the council's '<i>Bridging the Gap</i>' strategy, the findings from the programme of reviews will have a significant bearing on the shape of services in future years in terms of the model of service delivery (e.g. shared services), with the principle of securing value for money for local residents at the forefront of any Members decisions. As at end of 2019-20, £1.27m of the programme's identified saving target of £1.43m had been fully identified and reflected in the Medium Term Financial Plan.</p> <p>On an officer level, the council has a Workforce Development Plan in place. The plan has a focus on management development and succession planning with the following key priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational development; • Leadership development; • Skills Development; • Recruitment & retention; and • Pay & rewards. <p>As a key part of its lIP action plan and commitment to being an 'employer of choice', the council is scheduled to review its Workforce Development Plan in 2020-21 to ensure it is in line with the ambitions and objectives for the authority. See E2: <i>Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals</i>.</p>

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Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p>E2: <i>Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publishing a statement that specifies the types of decisions that are delegated and those reserved for the collective decision making of the governing body. Developing protocols to ensure that elected and appointed leaders negotiate with each other regarding their respective roles early on in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained. Ensuring the leader and the chief executive have clearly defined and distinctive leadership roles within a structure whereby the chief executive leads in implementing strategy and managing the delivery of services and other outputs set by members and each provides a check and a balance for each other's authority. 	<p>A scheme of delegation is in place and is held within Annex 1 of the Constitution. The scheme is considered annually and was re-issued and agreed at Annual Council in May 2019. The scheme sets out responsibilities of the council and the responsibilities delegated to relevant committees such as the Finance and Audit Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The council has appointed a full-time Chief Executive who is also the Head of Paid Service. The council's Constitution (Annex 1 - Section 1.12 – Proper Officers) clearly defines the responsibilities of the Chief Executive.</p> <p>The Chief Executive and the Leader of the council have weekly one-to-one meetings as part of a range of regular communication.</p> <p>With the council having adopted its strategic objectives via its Corporate Plan, the council's Corporate Management Team is tasked with implementing this political direction and has a number of methods in place to achieve this. The Corporate Management Team consists of the Chief Executive, Directors and includes the appointed Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer (or nominated deputies as required).</p> <p>Additionally, Wider Management Team meetings have continued in 2019-20 consisting of the Chief Executive, Directors, Assistant Directors and Service Managers, with meetings scheduled once a month. Information from these meetings is then disseminated to officers within the departments through the PMF arrangement. In addition, the agendas and minutes of all Management Team meetings are accessible to the entire Wider Management Team to ensure that all senior managers are able to build a wider knowledge and understanding of the work that is being undertaken across the authority.</p> <p>Regular meetings are also held between the Leader and a number of key officers throughout the organisation, including the Chief Executive, Directors, Section 151 Officer and Service Managers. Through these meetings the Leader is able to ensure that he is kept up-to-date on key projects and issues and provide the political leadership direction as required. Other Lead Members also hold briefings with a number of officers that provide the services within their portfolio of responsibilities to ensure there is an understanding of both officer and Member needs throughout the organisation.</p>

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Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p>E2: <i>Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals</i> <i>[cont.]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing the capabilities of members and senior management to achieve effective leadership and to enable the organisation to respond successfully to changing legal and policy demands as well as economic, political and environmental changes and risks by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ensuring members and staff have access to appropriate induction tailored to their role and that on-going training and development matching individual and organisational requirements is available and encouraged; ○ ensuring members and officers have the appropriate skills, knowledge, resources and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities and ensuring that they are able to continually update their knowledge; ○ ensuring personal, organisational and system-wide development through shared learning, including lessons learnt from governance weaknesses both internal and external. 	<p>In regards to sustainable senior officer and Member development, the council has a variety of initiatives in place to ensure the authority can continue to thrive in the challenging and changing legal and policy environment.</p> <p>At an officer level, the council has put in place an induction process which covers generic corporate issues and is completed for all new starters. The process also includes the distribution of corporate policies identified for reading and formal sign-off. This ensures that new starters not only receive service specific training but also get an understanding of the corporate organisation and their responsibilities. In addition, the council has also introduced a staff handbook which is provided to all new members of staff and outlines the code of conduct and other key information.</p> <p>In addition, specific inductions are arranged for those officers who are 'front-line'. Those officers working within the council's operational services (refuse collectors, street cleansers etc.) go through a specific induction programme which is tailored to their roles within the council prior to commencing their duties.</p> <p>In addition, all officers that are undertaking shared or joint-working initiatives at GBC must go through a 'Shared Services Induction' checklist.</p> <p>In terms of assessment and development, in line with the council's PMF, appraisals are to be carried out every year for all officers and half-yearly reviews are also carried out as required. Through this officers are able to assess the levels of performance being realised and, equally, highlight any additional training needs they require in order to meet set targets. These can also be picked up through the regular one-to-ones that occur during the year.</p> <p>A small number of appraisals were not completed in 2019-20 as recognised by the 'Manager Assurance Statements' that form part of this governance review process. The importance of performance appraisal and personal development is to be confirmed in the council's new Workforce Development Plan, a key part of the established liP action plan scheduled for 2020-21, delivery of which will form a core AGS recommendation (see E2: below).</p> <p>The council has a defined training budget available which covers qualification training, non-qualification training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD). This enables the council to respond to training needs which come about not only through staff turnover and continued development, but also changes in legislation, such as the requirement for persons involved in civil enforcement to be properly qualified. In addition, each year Service Managers provide a detailed plan for their own individual services within their Service Business Plan and includes a number of officers on professional training qualifications e.g. accountancy.</p>

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Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p>E2: <i>Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals</i> <i>[cont.]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holding staff to account through regular performance reviews which take account of training or development needs. • Ensuring arrangements are in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce and support individuals in maintaining their own physical and mental wellbeing. • Taking steps to consider the leadership's own effectiveness and ensuring leaders are open to constructive feedback from peer review/inspections. • Ensuring that there are structures in place to encourage public participation. 	<p>To ensure officers and Members have appropriate knowledge of changing legislative demands on the authority, monthly policy briefings are provided to the council's Wider Management Team that provide a summary of all recent policy announcements and consultations from central government. This is supplemented by a half-yearly legislative briefing to Management Team that analyses significant legislative changes introduced by the government.</p> <p>On a less formal level, the council has introduced an internal newsletter (<i>Our Borough</i>) that is distributed monthly and helps provide a further layer of key messages for all staff ranging from legislative changes through to opportunities for personal health development. At a Member level a similar informal product (<i>Member's Bulletin</i>) is provided to outline key developments in the council and opportunities for engaging with the community at various forums, as well as Member training and development sessions.</p> <p>In order to enable Members to have the knowledge base with which to carry out effective decision making and scrutiny, an annual training and development plan is delivered. This was especially important in 2019-20 given the large number of new Members to the council following the local elections in May 2019. A mixture of statutory, formal and awareness/ educational sessions, the comprehensive programme is tailored to meet all needs.</p> <p>Underpinning all efforts in terms of workforce capability is the council's commitment to the Investors in People (IiP) accreditation. NOTE: In its latest assessment in 2019-20, the council secured a 'Silver' accreditation. A detailed action plan is in place to work towards implementing key milestones from the review process in 2020-21 and will form a key AGS recommendation.</p> <p>More broadly, the council is committed to promoting the physical and mental health and wellbeing of the workforce through specific interventions and opportunities, forming a central part of the role of all managers. There is a dedicated intranet page with a wide range of support and guidance for staff and their managers covering a wide range of health and wellbeing topics e.g. Employee Assistance Programme, The Gr@nd's health programmes.</p> <p>NOTE: A number of managers reported the absence of health and safety work assessments in 2019-20. In light of the rapidly evolving Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on the 'new workplace', a DSE programme for the working environment in 2020-21 will present as an AGS recommendation.</p> <p>The council's arrangements for community consultation and how that feeds into local policy development is set out in this review document at B3: <i>Engaging with individual citizens and service users effectively</i> to this review document.</p>

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Core Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management		
Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p>F1: <i>Managing risk</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognising that risk management is an integral part of all activities and must be considered in all aspects of decision making. Implementing robust and integrated risk management arrangements and ensuring that they are working effectively. Ensuring that responsibilities for managing individual risks are clearly allocated. 	<p>The council expects volatility and risk in the environment in which it operates. The council has a long-established process in place to identify the principal risks that may influence or impact on the delivery of services. The risk management process requires judgements to be made on the likelihood and impact of a potential risk and enables the council to develop and implement appropriate controls to manage or mitigate these risks to reduce the impact on the council.</p> <p>Monitoring risk is an on-going process and compliments all council projects and day to day business. At a corporate level, an annual review is undertaken of both the council's Risk Management Strategy and the Corporate Risk Register.</p> <p>In March 2011 it was agreed by Cabinet that the Risk Management Strategy would only be presented for approval if it was subject to updates and amendments resulting in material changes to the strategy. The review conducted in 2019-20 identified that no updates were required to the Strategy. The revised Strategy was approved by Cabinet.</p> <p>Informing the Corporate Risk Register, each service area must also consider risks as part of the business planning, project management and other corporate processes and, equally, also identify relevant actions and controls to put in place to mitigate identified operational risks.</p> <p>Additionally all committee reports include an appendix that identifies the 'implications' of any decisions being recommended through the report, including an assessment of risk. This appendix is also included in formal reports to the Corporate Management Team.</p>

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Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p style="text-align: center;">F2: <i>Managing performance</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring service delivery effectively including planning, specification, execution and independent review. • Providing members and senior management with regular reports on service delivery plans and on progress towards outcome achievement. • Making decisions based on relevant, clear objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks inherent in the organisation's financial, social and environmental position and outlook. • Ensuring an effective scrutiny or oversight function is in place which provides constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives before, during and after decisions are made thereby enhancing the organisation's performance and that of any organisation for which it is responsible. • Ensuring there is consistency between specification stages (such as budgets) and post implementation reporting (e.g. financial statements). 	<p>An effective PMF is vital to the success of any organisation in delivering consistently high quality services to local residents. The Corporate Plan, designed in consideration of community need and consultation, presented a new PMF allowing the council to evaluate if it is effectively achieving against each of the stated corporate objectives. On a quarterly basis formal qualitative and quantitative performance reports are presented to the appropriate Cabinet Committee enabling scrutiny in the performance of the council's key frontline services. This is supported by quarterly publications of the council's performance via <i>Your Borough</i> and the council's website. Completing the reporting cycle, the council also reports details of the year-end outturns for the framework in its Annual Performance Report.</p> <p>The PMF is further enhanced with a suite of 'comparative' indicators. This product, presented to the Corporate Management Team, sees the council's core performance and financial indicators benchmarked against identified 'nearest neighbour' authorities. The findings of this intelligence enable the Corporate Management Team to take action as part of its budget and business planning to ensure continued service improvement.</p> <p>All committee reports to Members in 2019-20 were drafted with explicit consideration of the financial implications of any decision along with other implications including; Corporate Plan objectives, s11 of the Children Act 2004 and an assessment of risk. Therefore any decisions that would impact on for example Objective 1 – <i>People</i>, which features policy commitments relating to the environment, would be presented with a risk impact assessment of the decision to the broader health of the local environment.</p> <p>Annex 1 of the Constitution sets out the responsibilities of the council and the responsibilities delegated to committees including the responsibilities of the Overview Scrutiny committee. The Overview Scrutiny Committee meets on a monthly basis, with agendas, minutes and details of Membership published to the council's website. The committee is chaired by the Leader of the Opposition and the committee is able to 'call-in' decisions from the Cabinet in order for them to be further scrutinised. The Overview Scrutiny Committee has an established work plan process to provide a framework for the activities of the Committee. In 2019-20, the following reviews were initiated; Street Cleansing and Maritime Strategy with the findings and recommendations to be reported back to Committee Members.</p> <p>Annex 2 of the Constitution sets out the Financial Procedure Rules for the council. This provides a framework to the development of the Budget, arrangements and controls for budgetary control, and the end stage of auditing of the council's accounts. The council's transparency webpage includes details of the Civic Budget Book and the published financial statements, along with a series of core financial policies.</p>

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Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p>F3: <i>Robust internal control</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligning the risk management strategy and policies on internal control with achieving objectives. • Evaluating and monitoring risk management and internal control on a regular basis. • Ensuring effective counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are in place. • Ensuring additional assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control is provided by the internal auditor. • Ensuring an audit committee or equivalent group/ function, which is independent of the executive and accountable to the governing body: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ provides a further source of effective assurance regarding arrangements for managing risk and maintaining an effective control environment; ○ that its recommendations are listened to and acted upon. 	<p>The purpose of the council’s Risk Management Strategy is; “<i>to embed risk management into the daily operations of the council. Good risk management will lead to good management, good performance, good stewardship of public money, good public engagement and, ultimately, good outcomes for citizens and service users.</i>”</p> <p>The strategy is reviewed and updated annually and presented to Cabinet when substantial changes are required.</p> <p>In practice, in conjunction with the corporate risk register, operational risks to the achievement of the council’s core objectives are captured as part of the business planning process which also ensures detailed actions are put in place to mitigate such risk.</p> <p>Annex 1 of the Constitution sets out the responsibilities of the council and the responsibilities delegated to committees including the Finance and Audit Committee which has a responsibility to; “<i>monitor the effective development and operation of risk management in the authority</i>”. This responsibility helps strengthen the council’s risk management arrangements through close scrutiny of the management actions specified in the Corporate Risk Register and enhanced contribution to the development of the annual Corporate Risk Register. As such, in monitoring the council’s risks the Finance and Audit Committee oversee a mid-year review of the Corporate Risk Register, offering Members the opportunity to both review existing risks and the work being delivered to mitigate, and to suggest the addition of new risks for consideration.</p> <p>The council’s Internal Audit and Counter Fraud team is delivered through a shared service with Medway Council. The service has put in place a formal strategy to outline the core objectives of its work for the 2019-20 period. In delivering against this strategy, and in order to comply with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, the service presented an Audit and Counter Fraud Plan for 2019-20, approved by the Finance and Audit Committee. The Plan includes details of resources dedicated to deliver a programme of planned audit work to assist both councils in strengthening their internal control environments, and proactive counter fraud work conducting investigations into referrals received and frauds identified. In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, the team has undertaken a role to identify all amendments to internal control mechanisms introduced by the Corporate Management Team. In doing so these are able to be effectively monitored and that future revisions to policies and processes are carried out.</p> <p>The Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and Whistleblowing Policy are both available on the council’s website and in 2019-20 were distributed to officers via the NETconsent system, and the manual sign-up process for officers without IT access.</p>

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Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p>F4: <i>Managing data</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring effective arrangements are in place for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data, including processes to safeguard personal data. • Ensuring effective arrangements are in place and operating effectively when sharing data with other bodies. • Reviewing and auditing regularly the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring. 	<p>Gravesham Borough Council collects, holds and uses data about people and organisations with whom it deals with in order to conduct its business. As part of the council's governance control arrangements therefore, the council's Data Protection Policy outlines the scope of the agenda and the measures the council has in place to mitigate the risk of data breaches. Refreshed to account for the implications of the Data Protection Act 2018, the policy also sets out the appointed Data Protection officers charged with promoting the policy and monitoring compliance. As part of the council's work to enhance the level of governance control in this area, all formal decisions and committee reports require consideration of the need for a relevant data impact assessment.</p> <p>The council makes information available to the public via the information access regime provided for by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) 2004. Individuals may also access their own personal data by exercising the right of subject access under the Data Protection Act 1998.</p> <p>The council complies with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 by publishing accurate data within appropriate time frames in the areas mandated by the Code to the council's website.</p> <p>The council has also committed as a signatory to the current Kent and Medway Information Sharing Agreement. The main purpose of the agreement is to provide services in Kent and Medway with a best practice framework for the governance and exchange of personal and sensitive data. Procedures on how to comply with the framework, including relevant administrative arrangements are made available to council officers as required.</p> <p>This agenda is overseen by the council's Information Governance Group, chaired by the Director (Corporate Services), the council's appointed Senior Information Risk Officer.</p> <p>More broadly, the council is dedicated to continually seeking to improve the scope and quality of its data to support good decision-making and improved service outcomes. Central to this is the council's PMF that makes clear the council's commitment and arrangements to ensuring good data quality. Arrangements put in place by the policy include the annual verification of performance data.</p> <p>Collectively these processes ensure the most accurate and up to date performance information, vital for decision making purposes at Corporate Management Team and Member level.</p>

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Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p>F5: <i>Strong public financial management</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring financial management supports both long term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance. Ensuring well-developed financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control, including management of financial risks and controls. 	<p>The council's financial planning arrangements ensure that finances remain sustainable and robust and that both revenue and capital resources are aligned with the key policy objectives. This future planning, aimed at resourcing the achievement of core objectives is evidenced through the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.</p> <p>In setting out the financial context facing the council, the MTFS identifies the pressure the General Fund is facing over the period. To bridge the resourcing gap which has been identified, the MTFS has put in place a number of strategies (Bridging the Gap, Change Strategy, enhanced use of benchmarking analysis) to ensure that it is able to optimise income generation, be innovative in the delivery of services and ensure that resources are appropriately focused on the needs and aspirations for the borough.</p> <p>Within the council's financial planning are a number of more short-term controls to manage the council's finances in line with achieving adopted corporate objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Civic Budget Book for the council sets out the budgetary requirements for the year and is agreed annually. It is published on the council's website for public review. Monitoring controls are in place, with quarterly budget monitoring reports presented to the Cabinet and Finance and Audit Committee. A set of Financial Statements are produced for each financial year. The Statement of Accounts summarises the council's financial performance during the year and includes key financial statements supported by notes. Evidencing the successful approach to financial management, the External Auditors for the council conducted an annual audit of the Statement of Accounts, with their findings published and reported to the Finance & Audit Committee. The council has adopted CIPFA's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2017, producing an annual Treasury Management Report (including the Annual Investment Strategy Report) and an annual Treasury Management Review report outlining treasury management activities and performance for the previous year. The council also submits regular in-year treasury management monitoring reports to the Finance & Audit Committee. <p>The s151 Officer ensures that appropriate advice is given on all financial matters, proper financial records and accounts are kept, and oversees an effective system of financial control.</p> <p>Annex 2 of the Constitution sets out the Financial Procedure Rules for the council. This provides a framework to the development of the Budget, arrangements and controls for budgetary control, and the end stage of auditing of the council's accounts.</p>

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Core Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability		
Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p>G1: <i>Implementing good practice in transparency</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing and communicating reports for the public and other stakeholders in an understandable style appropriate to the intended audience and ensuring that they are easy to access and interrogate. • Striking a balance between providing the right amount of information to satisfy transparency demands and enhance public scrutiny while not being too onerous to provide and for users to understand. 	<p>The council continues to be committed to the government's transparency agenda and is compliant with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015.</p> <p>A specific section of the council's website has been created in order to enable the publication of a number of key data sets and formal reports including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Staff Salaries & Organisation chart; • Procurement and contracts data; • Civic Budget Book and Financial Statements; • Pay Policy Statement; and • Member Allowances.
<p>G2: <i>Implementing good practices in reporting</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting at least annually on performance, value for money and the stewardship of its resources. • Ensuring the performance information that accompanies the financial statements is prepared on a consistent and timely basis and the statements allow for comparison with other similar organisations. • Ensuring members and senior management own the results. 	<p>The council's website forms an essential part in delivering the council's commitment to openness and transparency in how it conducts its business. Reports available via the Council's Transparency webpage include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Report: Alongside the quarterly performance monitoring reports, published via Cabinet Committee agendas and summarised in <i>Your Borough</i> publications, the council also produces an Annual Report to complete the performance reporting process. In 2019-20 the council therefore published its Annual Report for 2018-19. • Financial Statements: The Statement of Accounts, produced each year, summarises the council's financial performance during the year and includes key financial statements supported by notes. The Statement of Accounts also includes a dedicated section to performance management. The presented performance indicators have been selected not only to evidence the link between the resourcing of the council against the delivery of its core objectives but, as nationally recognised indicators reported to government, to enable accurate performance benchmarking against comparative authorities. • Evidencing the successful approach to financial management, the External Auditors for the council conducted an annual audit of the council's Statement of Accounts, with their findings published and reported to the Finance & Audit Committee.

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Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p>G2: <i>Implementing good practices in reporting</i> <i>[cont.]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring robust arrangements for assessing the extent to which the principles contained in the Framework have been applied and publishing the results on this assessment including an action plan for improvement and evidence to demonstrate good governance. Ensuring that the Framework is applied to jointly managed or shared service organisations as appropriate. 	<p>The council has adopted a Code of Corporate Governance (the Code). The Code acts as the cornerstone to the council's governance framework by which it is accountable to its users and wider community stakeholders. Within that framework, the Code sets out a commitment as to how the council carries out its functions, and the procedures and processes by which it undertakes to deliver the adopted Corporate Objectives.</p> <p>The Code is subject to annual review and ensures governance arrangements are consistent with the core governance principles as set out in the '<i>Delivering Good Governance</i>' framework, published by CIPFA/SOLACE. The framework published in 2016 resulted in a new code for the authority, approved by Full Council.</p> <p>The council reviews its governance arrangements on an annual basis, culminating in the production of an Annual Governance Statement (AGS), approved by the Finance and Audit Committee. The review extends to the council's shared services as relevant assurance statements from service managers are secured as part of the review process.</p> <p>The AGS includes a detailed action plan setting out milestones for the year to deliver actions aimed at further strengthening governance controls. The council's AGS and further details of the authority's governance arrangements can be found here.</p>
<p>G3: <i>Assurance and effective accountability</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring that recommendations for corrective action made by external audit are acted upon. Ensuring an effective internal audit service with direct access to members is in place which provides assurance with regard to governance arrangements and recommendations are acted upon. Welcoming peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and implementing recommendations. 	<p>In line with the published CIPFA guidance, as part of the annual review of governance controls, a specific assurance statement was completed by the Head of Internal Audit to demonstrate how the council has complied with the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit in Public Service Organisations. This was complimented by the s151 Officer completing a specific 'Chief Financial Officer' assurance statement which sets out how the council has complied with the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government, as well as how the council has met its Section 151 obligations as set out within the Constitution.</p> <p>There were no issues of concern raised by either the Chief Financial Officer or the Head of Internal Audit. These statements form a key part of the annual review of governance control arrangements, the basis of the council's AGS. The AGS was presented to and approved by the Finance and Audit Committee in June 2019.</p> <p>The annual report from the Local Government Ombudsman is also considered by the Finance and Audit Committee.</p>

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Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p>G3: <i>Assurance and effective accountability</i> <i>[cont.]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gaining assurance on risks associated with delivering services through third parties and that this is evidenced in the annual governance statement. Ensuring that when working in partnership, arrangements for accountability are clear and that the need for wider public accountability has been recognised and met. 	<p>In 2019-20, the council undertook a LGA peer challenge exercise. The team's report was published in January 2020 and presented to Cabinet in February 2020.</p> <p>Amongst its core recommendations that have been formulated into a detailed action plan, the peer team found Gravesham to be a well-run council with a proactive approach to dealing with the financial challenges of the last decade. The council has sound finances and is well placed to deal with the challenges ahead.</p> <p>A report will be brought back to Cabinet in February 2021 to provide an update to Members on progress against the action plan.</p> <p>The council has in place a robust Working in Partnership Framework which is the central point of reference in developing new partnerships for the council, linking the formation of new partnership working opportunities to the delivery of the Corporate Plan's objectives. The framework outlines a procedure for managing partnerships that includes a pledge in 'Maintaining Ethical Standards'. This sets out what is expected of Members, officers and external parties in terms of working in partnership and specifically a commitment to "Accountability: They should be accountable to the public for their actions and the manner in which they carry out their responsibilities, and should co-operate fully and honestly with any scrutiny appropriate to their particular office."</p>

References

CIPFA/Solace:

- *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*
- *The Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government*
- *The role of the head of internal audit in public sector organisations*

Gravesham Borough Council: Code of Corporate Governance