

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

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. 	<p>To effectively communicate the council's vision and principles, the Corporate Plan is distributed via the council's website, supported with quarterly updates of key activities and service performance published via <i>Your Borough</i>. The Summer edition of <i>Your Borough</i> was cancelled as a result of the impact of Covid-19 and the responsive activities undertaken by the council.</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 Managers ensuring those without system access are aware of and have signed up to all relevant policies of the council.</p> <p>For Members, the council has a Standards Committee in place to reflect the changes to the standards regime brought about by the Localism Act and 2020-21 has seen a number of advancements to the Member standards agenda and the associated principles.</p> <p>Following the publication of the <i>Review of Local Government Ethical Standards</i>, prepared by the parliamentary Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL), the LGA launched a consultation on a new Model Code of Conduct for local authorities. In July 2020 the Standards Committee was subsequently presented with a draft Model Code of Conduct, along with a draft response to the consultation and, following Committee input, an agreed response was submitted to the consultation on behalf of the council.</p> <p>Following its consultation, a final version of the Code of Conduct was circulated by the LGA in December 2020 and is currently being reviewed by the Kent Secretaries Group - a forum for Heads of Legal and Monitoring Officers. The findings of this work potentially represent a key milestone in the council's governance environment and it is therefore anticipated a final version will be presented to the Standards Committee in 2021-22 for consideration and adoption.</p> <p>In July 2020 the Standards Committee also considered the CSPL's best practice recommendations to local authorities, where it was agreed that the authority was already compliant with most of the recommendations and have since adopted those outstanding.</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>

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p>A1: <i>Behaving with integrity</i> <i>[cont.]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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>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>In March 2021 Cabinet approved a new Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy for the authority. Working alongside the council's Anti-Money Laundering Policy and Whistleblowing Policy, the documents are collectively designed to develop an effective working environment that supports its zero-tolerance approach towards fraud, bribery, and corrupt activity. To communicate the council's commitment, all are published to the council's website.</p> <p>The council's Corporate Customer Service Charter establishes standards expected of officers. It also identifies 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 was considered by the Finance and Audit Committee in 2020-21.</p>
<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 operational culture and operation. Developing and maintaining robust policies and procedures which place emphasis on agreed ethical values. 	<p>Throughout 2020-21 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. To demonstrate the commitment to delivering on its climate motion, in 2020-21 the council enhanced its decision making controls by introducing climate change as an additional consideration.</p> <p>As part of the overarching Member training programme, a series of ethical awareness training sessions were delivered in 2019-20 – especially important given the large number of newly elected councillors following the 2019 local election. Due to the impact of Covid-19 the training programme was significantly reduced in 2020-21, with formal training sessions in the following areas; Licensing; Statement of Accounts & Treasury Management and Planning. In January 2021, Cabinet agreed a new programme for Members in 2021-22, including Communication and Social Media training aimed at identifying the appropriate ethical values and behaviour expected of elected Councillors in fulfilling their roles when engaging residents (see B3).</p>

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p>A2: <i>Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values</i> <i>[cont.]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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>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. In order to reflect changes in this agenda brought about by the UK leaving the EU, as well as better embracing Climate Change and sustainability in our procurement activity, alongside our commitment to supporting local businesses in recovering from the pandemic the Strategy, and associated Contract Procedure Rules, will be revised in 2021-22 (see A3 re: Constitution).</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. 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 "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". A revised Framework is set for adoption in 2021-22 (see B2).</p>
<p>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. 	<p>The council's Constitution sets out the roles and responsibilities of the Executive and all elected Members. 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. In 2020-21, updates to the Constitution included necessary changes required to reflect the introduction of the Rosherville Local Authority Trading Company. In order to ensure the correct legal division of powers and operating environment, changes involved: Responsibilities of the Cabinet, Cabinet Procedure Rules, Financial Procedure Rules, Employment Procedure Rules and Officer Code of Conduct (see C2).</p> <p>The council's Constitution also established formal roles and responsibilities of officers. 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 2020-21.

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p style="text-align: center;">A3: <i>Respecting the rule of law</i> <i>[cont.]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 2020-21, 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 2020-21. 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 effective and appropriate financial and legal advice - in line with statutory requirements - in all decisions taken by the council's Management.</p> <p>POTENTIAL ACTION: Central to the council's governance control environment, the Constitution ensures effective leadership throughout the authority, outlining the core executive and non-executive functions and the legal roles and responsibilities of the council. In order to ensure it remains up to date in regards to legal expectations and accurately reflective of the council's governance structure, completion of the next phase of the scheduled review of the Constitution will form an AGS recommendation for 2021-22, inclusive of key activities such as the implementation of revised Contract Procedure Rules (see A2).</p> <p>Complimenting constituted arrangements, the council's transparency webpages include specific information relating to the council's Corporate Management Team (CMT). Published in line with the expectations of the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, 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>To provide a framework to the reporting and response involved in dealing with a misuse of power, in March 2021 Cabinet approved a new Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy for the authority. Working alongside the council's Anti-Money Laundering Policy and Whistleblowing Policy, the documents are collectively designed to develop an effective working environment that supports its zero-tolerance approach towards fraud, bribery, and corrupt activity. To communicate the council's commitment, all three documents are published to the website.</p>

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

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 via the council's website. On a quarterly basis formal reports are presented to the appropriate Cabinet Committee enabling scrutiny in the performance of the council's key frontline services, supported by quarterly publications of key activities and performance via <i>Your Borough</i>. Completing the reporting cycle, the council also reports 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>.</p>

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

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. 	<p>The council has in place a clear statement of the organisation's purpose and its vision for the borough which underpin the authority'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 (see C1).</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 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 that form the foundation of the Corporate Plan.</p> <p>The work delivered against these objectives is measured both by qualitative and quantitative analysis, with quarterly updates of the council's key activities and service performance 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, linking the formation of new partnership working opportunities to the delivery of the council's Corporate Plan objectives.</p> <p>A review of the framework was undertaken in 2020-21 to account for the inclusion of a number of key governance controls including; revising the financial threshold for a significant partnership to £50,000 and ensuring the council's revised equalities objectives and climate change commitment form key considerations in the evaluation of any partnership arrangement.</p>

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p>B2: <i>Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders</i> <i>[cont.]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 revised framework was considered by the Performance and Administration Committee and will ultimately be presented to Full Council in 2021-22 for adoption into the council's policy framework.</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 adopted corporate objectives. Collectively these arrangements form the Corporate Register of Partnerships.</p> <p>Outside of those formal established partnerships, the council has undertaken a review of its support for local community groups and stakeholders in 2021. The Covid-19 pandemic raised awareness of the level of support available and being delivered across Gravesham by the voluntary sector and, following the review, it was clear many organisations providing critical and valued services had taken drastic steps during the pandemic to adapt their services to address changing and emerging needs.</p> <p>As a result of the review, a list was compiled of those organisations who it was felt the council should extend its support through a 12 month funded Service Level Agreement. The awarded SLAs are to be reviewed at the end of the period to ensure that the council can consider any changes in need and demand, but also to ensure a process where all community organisations can be equally considered for support. This new approach to local community groups was endorsed by the Community and Leisure Committee.</p>
<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. 	<p>In 2021, the council adopted a new Community Engagement Strategy which sets out four core objectives as the framework for developing community engagement activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Being a listening council</i> • <i>Empowering residents and Communities</i> • <i>Supporting Community Organisations</i> • <i>Building Cohesive Communities</i> <p>To practically deliver effective engagement opportunities with local residents, the council has a number of diverse community-based initiatives.</p> <p>For example, the council has an established suite of engagement forums to enable 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. Established community forums include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Gravesham Youth Council; and ○ Gravesham Business Network

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p>B3: <i>Engaging with individual citizens and service users effectively</i> <i>[cont.]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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>Alongside the engagement opportunities presented through its established forums, the council provide various consultation opportunities through its website enabling the community to help shape service provision. In 2020-21 formal consultations included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Housing Allocation Policy;</i> ○ <i>Tourism Strategy</i> ○ <i>Validation Requirements for Planning Applications; and</i> ○ <i>Public Space Protection Order in Gravesend.</i> <p>To promote transparency and wider engagement with council decisions, residents can use digital platforms such as; Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube to get updates from, and interact with, the authority. The role of Members in promoting consultation and responding to public feedback is crucial, with the Constitution setting out the importance of Members as ‘Community Representatives’. The Constitution also presents guidelines for public petitions in terms of their administration and how the council would respond, including Full Council debate.</p> <p>COMPLETE: Through the findings of the LGA Peer Challenge in 2019, it was acknowledged that more activity should 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, the 2019-20 Annual Governance Statement (AGS) included a commitment to develop appropriate products. Alongside the already referenced Community Engagement Strategy, in November 2020 Cabinet formally adopted a new Communications Strategy for the authority.</p> <p>In 2020-21, the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in the council’s engagement with residents and service users having to be adapted. Activity was delivered as an online or digital programme as face to face forums could not take place. Despite this limitation, feedback from respondents was well received and crucially helped shape end outcomes.</p> <p>In addition, in response to Covid-19 the government legislated to permit remote attendance by elected Members at formal meetings. This was conditional on other Members and the public being able to hear those participating in the meeting. As such, formal meetings were streamed live in 2020-21 and were available for viewing via the council’s YouTube channel. Despite the logistical challenges, the arrangements have proven particularly successful, with Member attendance levels at meetings significantly ahead of previous years. It has been confirmed that after 7 May 2021 - and despite ongoing social distancing requirements - meetings will revert back to in-person, counter to the successful level of Member engagement and attendance achieved with digital alternatives in 2020-21.</p>

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

Core Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.		
Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
C1: Defining outcomes	<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. 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. Underpinning the ongoing delivery of the Local Plan as a framework is the council's Local Development Scheme. Work towards the key milestones within the scheme is monitored by the established Local Plan Management Board, supported by a suite of key controls e.g. project plan and risk assessment that are regularly reported through to the CMT and Lead Member. To work towards the Local Plan 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> <p>To communicate the council's Corporate Plan, the document is made available via the council's website, complimented internally with a 'lite' or summary version being made available to all staff. This is supported by quarterly publications of the council's key activities and service performance via <i>Your Borough</i>. Completing the reporting cycle, the council also reports details of the year-end outturns for the PMF in its Annual Performance Report. Qualitative and quantitative 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, the council also adopted a PMF focussed on representing all service areas within the authority and specifically designed to introduce performance indicators for each adopted policy commitment. In 2020-21 a new suite of management indicators was introduced to monitor the impact of Covid-19 on critical services. To help facilitate delivery of the Corporate Plan, in 2020-21 a Corporate Delivery Plan was established in 2020-21. Drawing together the key projects and initiatives of service business plans and other governance sources, the material is presented against the council's Corporate Plan commitments to chart their respective delivery. The document forms the basis of senior management 1-1 activity, for which a new specific template has also been designed, including details of any relevant Management Team or Committee actions that are outstanding.</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. A key element to the process is the ability to define clear performance indicators for individual service objectives, coupled with a specific risk assessment to identify potential risks to services achieving objectives and mitigating actions.</p>

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p>C1: <i>Defining outcomes</i> <i>[cont.]</i></p>		<p>POTENTIAL ACTION: As a direct result of the significant impact presented by Covid-19 upon council services, the business planning process for 2021-22 was postponed in order to reduce the administrative burden to managers at such a critical point. The decision was taken in the knowledge all component materials (e.g. capital budgeting, risk management analysis, performance management)) are accounted for through individual reports to CMT and Cabinet and as such there would be minimised risk to this alternative approach. In order to effectively redraw the various elements that collectively constitute a service business plan within the council, the reinstatement of a timely and comprehensive business planning programme – specifically run in conjunction with the annual budget setting activities in 2021-22 – will form an AGS recommendation.</p>
<p>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. 	<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 (see E2).</p> <p>In 2020-21 the council introduced a new Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). Given the continued uncertainty around the future funding of local government and the significant uncertainty regarding the likely economic impact presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, Council considered it prudent and most effective to adopt a one year MTFS for 2021-22. The core objectives underlying the new strategy are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To return the council to a financially sustainable position;</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>As part of its plans to diversify its income stream and ultimately address the continued uncertainty surrounding local government funding, the council has established a Local Authority Trading Company (Rosherville Limited), with subsidiaries Rosherville Servicing and Rosherville Property Development Limited subsequently formed in 2020-21. These new trading arrangements enable the council to provide commercial services to the public and local businesses, with profits helping fund and sustain essential frontline services. The core principles underlying the MTFS are outlined at D2: <i>Planning interventions</i>.</p>

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p>C2: <i>Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits</i> [cont.]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 preparing reports for a decision, in 2020-21 each has been drafted with explicit consideration of the combined economic, social and environmental impact the decision will present the borough. For example, in 2020-21 Council adopted a new Equality Policy into the authority's policy framework, complete with the statutory requirement for a suite of equality objectives to be worked towards in the coming 4-year period. Throughout 2021, when undertaking decisions professional advice relating to the advancement of the Equalities agenda, alongside Equality Impact Assessments as required, has ensured the potential benefits a decision may bring are fully considered in line with the council's commitment to tackling discrimination, providing equality of opportunity for all and, more broadly, "<i>developing a cohesive and resilient community</i>".</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>

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

Core Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes		
Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
D1: <i>Determining interventions</i>	<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 in order to inform 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 which decisions are to be administered 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 2020-21 a series of formal consultations were undertaken that were fully considered as part of the end policy decisions (see B3).</p>
D2: <i>Planning interventions</i>	<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. 	<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 adopted 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>

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

<p style="text-align: center;">D2: <i>Planning interventions</i> <i>[cont.]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • 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>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 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 against all performance indicators, including an outline of all relevant achievements directly contributing to the council's corporate objectives, published to the council's transparency webpage. <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> <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 MTFS.</p> <p>Due to past and present prudent financial stewardship, the council has been able to proactively respond to the financial pressures first identified by the council in 2016 and those presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2020-21, these timely and targeted interventions culminated with Council adopting a balanced 2021-22 budget for the authority.</p>
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Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

<p style="text-align: center;">D2: <i>Planning interventions</i> <i>[cont.]</i></p>		<p>Given the continued uncertainty around the future funding of local government and the significant uncertainty regarding the likely economic impact presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, Council considered it prudent and most effective to also adopt a one year MTFS for 2021-22. The core objectives underlying the new strategy are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To return the council to a financially sustainable position;</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>Whilst the council has an acknowledged robust system of controls in place to deliver effective service planning, in 2020-21 the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been significant on the authority, both in terms of planned strategic activity and the requirement to adjust and reshape frontline service provision.</p> <p>Whether meeting the sizeable challenge of transforming the working environment in providing over 300 staff with the IT functionality for remote working, redirecting significant resources in the creation of a Vulnerable Persons Team to ensure appropriate support interventions for those most vulnerable local residents, the issuance of essential business support grants to support the local economy, or providing a comprehensive <i>Everyone In</i> initiative for rough sleepers in the borough, the authority has had to be resilient, creative and transformational in how it has adapted to the pressures presented to it and the local community more broadly throughout the last year.</p> <p>Despite a significant upturn in demand, and the logistical challenges presented by the new working environment for its officers, there was a 40% reduction in corporate complaints received by the council in relation to its service provision.</p> <p>COMPLETE: A recommendation by CIPFA for local government as a sector, ultimately built into an adopted action for the AGS 2019-20, was to undertake a review of the council's administration of the Covid-19 crisis. The review was to consider both the decisions undertaken in direct response and the future planning for preparedness of a second wave of the virus. The review was also tasked with considering the underpinning approach to business continuity across the organisation. The immediate practical challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic were considered by Members at Council in May 2020, with the full results of the subsequent formal review of the council's response presented to Cabinet in February 2021.</p>
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Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

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. 	<p>In the spirit of the principles and standards within CIPFA's Financial Management Code (FM 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.</p> <p>More broadly, to demonstrate that the processes the council has in place satisfy the 17 principles of good financial management established by the FM Code, the council undertook a self-assessment in 2020-21 with the results presented to the Finance and Audit Committee. The assessment concluded; <i>"there are no significant improvements to be made. Out of the 17 standards the council is compliant in 15 and moderate improvements are required for the other two standards."</i></p> <p>POTENTIAL ACTION: The new FM Code states that local authorities should be working towards compliance with the code during 2020-21, with the view to full compliance by the end of the financial year 2021-22. In order to deliver on the controls required in the set timescale, the commitment to establish a fully compliant suite of processes in 2021-22 will form an AGS recommendation.</p> <p>Due to past and present prudent financial stewardship, the council has been able to proactively respond to the financial pressures first identified by the council in 2016 and those presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2020-21, these timely and targeted interventions culminated with Council adopting a balanced 2021-22 budget for the authority.</p> <p>Given the continued uncertainty around the future funding of local government and the significant uncertainty regarding the likely economic impact presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, Council considered it prudent and most effective to also adopt a one year MTFS for 2021-22. The core objectives underlying the new strategy are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>To return the council to a financially sustainable position;</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>

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

<p>D3: <i>Optimising achievement of intended outcomes</i> <i>[cont.]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring the achievement of 'social value' through service planning and commissioning. 	<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; "<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>" Work to revise the Strategy with an enhanced focus on social value, complete with refreshed Contract Procedure Rules, is to commence in 2021-22 (see A2/A3).</p>
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Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

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: Progress, is the council's 'Service Review' programme. The aim of the programme was 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. The programme concluded in 2019-20 having achieved its financial targets, albeit recommendations continue to be monitored for implementation.</p> <p>A key legacy of the 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. As part of the council's wider activities to address the financial implications of the Covid-19 pandemic, plans to refresh the programme were approved by the CMT in 2020-21 with a new project team set to commence work in 2021-22.</p> <p>Internally on an officer level, the council has in place a Workforce Development Plan. The plan has a focus on management development and succession planning with the following key priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational and leadership development; • Skills Development; • Recruitment & retention; and • Pay & rewards. <p>OUTSTANDING: The 2019-20 AGS included a commitment to deliver an liP action plan in 2020-21 (see E2) within which a key activity was for the council to review its Workforce Development Plan to ensure it is in line with the ambitions and objectives for the authority. Unfortunately, the impact of Covid-19 upon council resources has meant this planned exercise has been delayed. Complementing a newly established appraisal process delivered in 2020-21, relevant research for the plan has been undertaken (e.g. a training needs assessment has been completed), with the aim to complete and adopt a new Workforce Development Plan in 2021-22.</p>

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

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 2020. The scheme sets out responsibilities of the council and those delegated to relevant committees, such as the Finance and Audit Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>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 to ensure appropriate channels of strategic intelligence.</p> <p>With the council having adopted its strategic objectives via its Corporate Plan, the authority's CMT is tasked with implementing this political direction and has a number of methods in place to achieve this. The CMT consists of the Chief Executive, Directors and includes the appointed Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer (or nominated deputies as required) and, as of 2020-21, the Communications Manager.</p> <p>Additionally, Wider Management Team meetings have continued in 2020-21 consisting of the Chief Executive, Directors, Assistant Directors and Service Managers, with meetings scheduled on a monthly basis. 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 maintain up-to-date knowledge of key projects and issues and is therefore able to provide effective political leadership. Other Lead Members also hold briefings with key officers of services within their portfolio of responsibilities to ensure there is an understanding of both officer and Member needs throughout the organisation – arrangements that have proven invaluable during the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Complementing these arrangements, the council has a well-established Joint Staff Forum. The Forum delivers an important communication role, enabling the two-way discussion of information and ideas between the CMT and staff representatives who are acting both as a barometer for the current state of morale in the organisation and as a key source of operational intelligence.</p>

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

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. .</p> <p>Specific inductions are arranged for those frontline officers working within the council's operational services (refuse collectors, street cleansers etc.) who undertake an induction and training programme which is tailored to their roles within the council prior to commencing their duties. In addition, all officers that are undertaking shared or joint-working initiatives at GBC must go through a 'Shared Services Induction' checklist.</p> <p>As part of the 2019-20 AGS action for an liP action plan, a new comprehensive induction process is currently under design and set for a 2021-22 launch.</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 undertaken 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 considered through the regular one-to-ones that occur during the year.</p> <p>58% of officer appraisals were completed in 2020-21. The importance of performance appraisal and personal development is to be reinforced in the council's new Workforce Development Plan, a key part of the council's commitment to the liP programme, assessment of which is scheduled for 2021-22 (see E1).</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, including those officers requiring professional training qualifications e.g. accountancy.</p>

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p>E2: <i>Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals</i> [cont.]</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, in 2020-21 the Chief Executive Officer introduced a weekly e-message for all staff. The messages provide a further layer of key communication for all staff, ranging from legislative changes through to opportunities for personal health development, and have proved particularly important in the face of the new operational environment the council has faced since the onset of Covid-19. 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. Although a much-reduced programme due to the impact of Covid-19 on council operations, the second half of 2020-21 saw a number of awareness briefings and formal training sessions in the following areas: Licensing; Statement of Accounts & Treasury Management and Planning. In January 2021, Cabinet agreed a new training programme for Members in 2021-22.</p> <p>COMPLETE: Underpinning all efforts in terms of workforce capability is the council's commitment to the Investors in People (IIP) accreditation and securing a status as 'an employer of choice'. In its latest assessment in 2019-20, the council secured a 'Silver' accreditation. The 2019-20 AGS included a commitment in 2020-21 to delivering a detailed action plan to work towards implementing key milestones for the programme. This action plan was implemented and work is being delivered as the authority works towards its next IIP assessment in 2021-22.</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 across the spectrum of health and wellbeing topics e.g. Employee Assistance Programme and The Gr@nd's health programmes, alongside an ongoing commitment to Mental Health Awareness week.</p>

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

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>		<p>COMPLETE: through the changes to the workplace location and operating environment as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, a commitment to a comprehensive programme of health and safety reviews was made in the 2019-20 AGS. With the home working arrangements fully embedded, a staff risk assessment was subsequently sent to every officer so that they could assess their work environment. Using this information, Managers had been able to make adjustments where necessary for staff members and other staff members were brought back into the office if their home environment was not suitable for them. The actions taken by the Wider Management Team in this area in addressing concerns and taking appropriate action was noticeable in feedback received from staff well-being questionnaires during the year. The Council supported all staff with health and wellbeing issues during the lockdown in 2020-21 and will continue to do so.</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>

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

Core Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management		
Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
F1: <i>Managing risk</i>	<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, with the results presented to Cabinet for endorsement.</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. In line with the findings of the 2019 LGA Peer Challenge, the review conducted in 2020-21 was undertaken in full consideration of the recommendations regarding strategic risk management as identified by Zurich in their 2019 report into the council's risk management arrangements. The 2020-21 review identified that no updates were required to the Strategy.</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 CMT Team.</p> <p>POTENTIAL ACTION: In researching this annual review process, a number of managers reported the absence of risk training as a potential area for enhanced provision. This relates directly to those managers outside of Wider Management Team (the existing cohort for training provision) who have responsibility for designing Service Business Plans i.e. those services without a Service Manager. In order to effectively assess service level risk and ensure this is considered within the wider corporate risk framework, a broader programme of risk management training in 2021-22 will form an AGS recommendation.</p>

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

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 in delivering consistently high quality services for 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. Formal qualitative and quantitative reports are presented to the appropriate Cabinet Committee quarterly, enabling scrutiny in the performance of the council's key frontline services. This is supported by quarterly publications of the council's key activities and service performance published via <i>Your Borough</i>. Completing the reporting cycle, the council also reports details of the year-end outturns for the framework in its Annual Performance Report.</p> <p>Corporate reporting is supplemented by individual services' own reports and thematic or project reporting. For example, having passed its climate motion in June 2019, the council committed to establishing the climate change agenda as a strategic theme to underpin the projects, initiatives and work involved in the delivery of the council's Corporate Plan as it works towards its ambition of carbon neutral status by 2030. In doing so a pledge was made to produce an Annual Report, with the first such report presented to Council in December 2020.</p> <p>All committee reports to Members in 2020-21 were drafted with explicit consideration of the financial implications of any decision along with other implications including; Corporate Plan objectives, legal duties and an assessment of risk. To demonstrate the commitment to delivering on its climate motion, in 2020-21 the council also enhanced its decision making controls by introducing climate change as an additional consideration. 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 within the context of the council's climate motion.</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. Chaired by the Leader of the Opposition, 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 to provide a framework for its activities, with the Maritime Strategy review a key focus in 2020-21.</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>

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

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. 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 2020-21, approved by the Finance and Audit Committee. The Plan includes details of resources dedicated to deliver a programme of planned audit work to assist councils, both in strengthening their internal control environments and in proactive counter fraud work by conducting investigations into referrals received and frauds identified.</p> <p>In light of Covid-19, a slightly reduced programme of assurance reviews was undertaken in 2020-21, with the reviews that didn't go ahead relating to Project Management – GDPR and Planning Applications now being delivered in the 2021-22 programme and Community Safety cancelled due to the ending of the joint Dartford and Gravesham Community Safety Partnership. Despite this, the Head of Internal Audit was able to provide a full opinion for 2020-21, delivered in full consideration of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit in Public Service Organisations (see G3).</p>

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p>F3: <i>Robust internal control</i> <i>[cont.]</i></p>		<p>In response to the amended audit programme, the team reallocated its resources and took on a key role in the evolving governance environment in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Alongside providing scrutiny and oversight to the allocation of business grants, in 2020-21 the team the team took responsibility for identifying all amendments to internal control mechanisms introduced by the CMT in response to operational challenges. In doing so, these amended controls are able to be effectively monitored to ensure that future revisions to policies and processes are carried out.</p> <p>To provide an effective framework for counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements, in March 2021 Cabinet approved a new Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy for the authority. Working alongside the council's Anti-Money Laundering Policy and Whistleblowing Policy, the documents are collectively designed to develop an effective working environment that supports its zero-tolerance approach towards fraud, bribery, and corrupt activity. To communicate the council's commitment, all three documents are published to the website.</p>
<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>The 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 authority's Data Protection Policy outlines the scope of the agenda and the measures put 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 timeframes 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>

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

Standard	Method of compliance	Evidence of compliance
<p>F4: <i>Managing data</i> <i>[cont.]</i></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, involving in-year spot-checks and 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 CMT and Member level.</p>
<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 MTFS.</p> <p>Due to past and present prudent financial stewardship, the council has been able to proactively respond to the financial pressures first identified by the council in 2016 and those presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2020-21, these timely and targeted interventions culminated with Council adopting a balanced 2021-22 budget for the authority.</p> <p>Given the continued uncertainty around the future funding of local government and the significant uncertainty regarding the likely economic impact presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, Council considered it prudent and most effective to also adopt a one year MTFS for 2021-22. The core objectives underlying the new strategy are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To return the council to a financially sustainable position;</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>

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

<p>F5: <i>Strong public financial management</i> <i>[cont.]</i></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 (see G2).• The council's Capital Strategy is intended to outline the principles followed by the authority in its approach to capital investment over the long-term. Annually reviewed, the strategy sets out the framework within which the council will plan, procure, prioritise and manage its capital investment and financing decisions in support of the delivery of the council's priorities, as set out in the Corporate Plan, and has intrinsic links to the Treasury Management Strategy of the council.• 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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Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

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>Complementing formal reporting processes to Members – as set out elsewhere in this review document – the council's website forms an essential part in delivering the authority's commitment to openness and transparency in how it conducts its business.</p> <p>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 2020-21 the council therefore published its Annual Report for 2019-20. • 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, enabling the authority the ability to measure its effective value for money.

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

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>Through this process, the council reviews its governance arrangements on an annual basis culminating in the production of an 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 ahead to deliver activities 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.</p> <p>The annual report from the Local Government Ombudsman is also considered by the Finance and Audit Committee.</p>

Annual Review of Governance Arrangements: 2020-21

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 an 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, crucial in light of the impact presented by Covid-19.</p> <p>It was committed that a report be brought back to Cabinet in 2021 to provide an update to Members on progress against the action plan and this was duly delivered at February's meeting.</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> <p>Following a review 2020-21, a revised Working in Partnership Framework is set for adoption in 2021-22 (see B2).</p>

References

CIPFA:

- *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*
- *Application of the Good Governance Framework*
- *Treasury Management in the Public Services: code of practice*
- *Financial Management Code*

Gravesham Borough Council:

- *Code of Corporate Governance*