

Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO: Governance and Audit Committee

DATE: 24th January 2024

LOCATION: Remotely via Video Conference

TITLE: Annual Governance Statement 2022-23

PURPOSE OF REPORT: To approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2022-2023

Background

The Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 requires local authorities to conduct at least annually a review of the effectiveness of their governance framework including their systems of internal control. This review must be documented in an Annual Governance Statement and published as part of the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts.

The Governance & Audit Committee is responsible for monitoring the governance arrangements on behalf of the Council.

The Annual Governance Statement has been updated with dates (highlighted) and the below text has been added on pages 22,28 and 29

'The Annual Report at year-end contains the results of the internal audit annual self-assessment of the service, based on CIPFA's LG Application Note's template. This was subject to an external peer review in May 2022, and an external assessment is planned to be repeated every five years, as required by the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS)'.

Annual Governance Statement 2022-23 (Appendix 1)

The Annual Governance Statement for 2022-23 is attached.
Committee is requested to:

- i) note and consider its contents, and
- ii) recommend that Council approves the Draft Annual Governance Statement 2022-23

RECOMMENDATION(S):

The Committee is requested to:

- i. Note the contents of this report;
- ii. Recommend that Council approves the Draft Annual Governance Statement 2022-23
(Appendix 1)

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION(S): To progress the publication of the Annual Governance Statement 2022-2023.

Appendices: **Appendix 1:** Draft Annual Governance Statement 2022-23

Head of Service: Elin Prysor, Corporate Lead Officer – Legal & Governance Services / Monitoring Officer

Reporting Officer: Katy Sinnett-Jones – Governance Officer

Date: 24.01.2024

Annual Governance Statement

2022-23



Approved by Council [x]

Contents

1	Executive Summary	3
2	Assessment of the effectiveness of key elements of the governance framework	5
3	Corporate Governance Achievements for 2022-23	7
4	Opinion on the level of assurance that the governance arrangements can provide	29
5	Issues identified for last year (2022-2023)	32
6	Agreed action plan for matters to be considered during 2023-2024	40
7	Conclusion.....	46
8	Certification of Annual Governance Statement.....	46

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ceredigion County Council ('the Council') is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

The Council is also committed to improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of its citizens. This commitment is set out in the Council's Corporate Strategy 2022-2027 and describes how the council will meet the challenges ahead and make the most of opportunities. The Council's vision for this period is that the Council *'delivers value for money, sustainable bilingual public services, that support a strong economy and healthy environment, while promoting well-being in our people and our communities'* and is to be achieved by fulfilling the Corporate Priorities, which are:

1. Boosting the Economy, Supporting Businesses and Enabling Employment;
2. Creating Caring and Healthy Communities;
3. Providing the Best Start in Life and Enabling Learning at All Ages; and
4. Creating Sustainable, Greener and Well-Connected Communities.

To be successful the council must have a solid foundation of good governance and sound financial management. The Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance ensures that we are doing the right things, in the right way, in line with our values. The Local Code is supported by a Governance Assurance Framework that sets out what assurances the Council seeks to obtain, and how this will be done.

A copy of the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance and Annual Governance Statement is available on the Council's website at <https://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/your-council/councillors-committees/annual-governance-statement/>.

The Council also has a duty under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to arrange to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council must ensure proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs are in place, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, and which includes the arrangements for the management of risk. The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 is in force and the Council has taken the necessary steps to ensure compliance.

A Governance Framework was developed in 2010 and has been revised in accordance with the CIFA/SOLACE Delivering Good Governance in Local

Government Framework 2016. The framework is used to review the governance arrangements on an annual basis.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 also introduces new governance arrangements for public services in Wales. Public bodies are required to carry out sustainable development. It places a well-being duty on public bodies to set and publish well-being objectives designed to maximise their contribution to the seven national well-being goals. They are also expected to take all reasonable steps towards achieving their objectives.

Following the review and in accordance with the requirements of the Framework a Local Code of Corporate Governance is in place and has been reviewed for 2023-24.

The Local Code of Corporate Governance brings together in one document all the governance and accountability arrangements the Council has in place. The Code is based on best practice guidance set out in the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework Delivering Good Governance in Local Government.

The Council's Governance Framework is based on the International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector (CIPFA/IFAC, 2014) and the following seven principles:

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

The Council is required, each year, to produce an Annual Governance Statement ('AGS') (this document), which explains how the Council has complied with the seven core principles and sub-principles contained in its Governance Framework and the Local Code of Corporate Governance, and also meets the requirement of The Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014. This AGS gives assurances on compliance for the year ending 31 March 2023 and up to the date of approval of the Statement of Accounts. The review confirmed that the Council's governance arrangements are effective and fit for purpose.

The Leader of the Council and Chief Executive both recognise the importance of having a solid foundation of good governance and sound financial management. They pledge their commitment to address the matters highlighted in this AGS, and to further enhance the Council's governance arrangements.

The Leader and Chief Executive confirm they have been advised of the implications of the review by Senior Management and the Audit Committee and are satisfied that the steps outlined in this AGS will address the areas for improvement.

Signed on behalf of **Ceredigion County Council**

Leader of the Council

Chief Executive

Date: xx/xx/xxxx

Date: xx/xx/xxxx

2 Assessment of the effectiveness of key elements of the Governance Framework

The Council is committed to demonstrating that it has the necessary corporate governance arrangements in place to perform effectively.

The Leader of the Council provides clear strategic direction and the Constitution clearly defines the roles of Councillors and Officers. Internal and External Audit, Ethics and Standards Committee and the Governance and Audit Committee are committed to ensuring the governance arrangements are effective and robust.

The Council has conducted an annual review of the effectiveness of its governance against the CIPFA/SOLACE Delivering Good Governance Framework (2016). The review involved a member/officer workshop in which the Council's Governance Framework Document was analysed and reviewed, with further changes made after the workshop reported to the Governance and Audit committee. Contributions were made to the review by the following Members: the Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee along with councillor and lay members of the committee. In addition, the Monitoring Officer, Corporate Manager - Internal Audit, Governance Officer, Corporate Lead Officer - Democratic Services, Corporate Manager – Democratic Services, Corporate Lead Officer – People & Organisation and the Corporate Manager – Partnerships, Performance and Public Protection also took part.

During the workshop each behaviour was introduced and scored against a scoring mechanism, as follows:

- 1/2 Unacceptable Immediate action required
- 3/4 Below satisfactory - urgent Action Required (within 3-6 months)
- 5/6 Satisfactory - Action Required (before end of year 9-12 months)
- 7/8 Acceptable Minor adjustments may be required
- 9/10 Good - overall Governance considered to be good and meets best practice no further action required

Each score used in the Governance Framework Document is a score out of 10 e.g. a score of 7/8 means a score of between 7 and 8 out of a total 10 marks.

The Governance Framework Document was also circulated to other officers, who have governance/management responsibilities within the Council. The review framework was presented to the Governance and Audit Committee on 17th January 2023.

The effectiveness of the governance framework draws on evidence and assurances from:

- Internal and External Audit and Inspection;
- Financial Controls;
- Risk and Performance Management;
- Legal and Ethical Standards;
- Corporate Directors and Other Senior Management, including the S.151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer;
- The Governance and Audit Committee; and
- Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

In addition, the Corporate Manager - Internal Audit undertakes an independent review of the Governance Framework and the method of scoring and evidence, on an annual basis. The review of the 2022/23 Framework was completed in January 2023 and provided 'high' assurance that there was a sound system of scrutiny and robustness in place. This was reported to the Governance and Audit Committee in March 2023.

The Council has drawn together a Local Code for Corporate Governance which sets out the systems and processes, and cultures and values, by which the authority is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that code and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims

and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The Local Code for Corporate Governance is available on the Council's website at <https://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/your-council/councillors-committees/annual-governance-statement/>.

The CIPFA Financial Management code sets the standards of financial management for local authorities. It is designed to support effective practice in financial management and to assist local authorities in demonstrating their budgetary sustainability. The S151 Officer has undertaken a self-assessment review and is satisfied that the Council is compliant with the code.

3 Corporate Governance Achievements for 2022-23

The Local Code for Corporate Governance sets out the Local Authority's commitment to the principles of good governance. The following paragraphs outline the Corporate Governance achievements during 2022-23.

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

Behaving with integrity

- Code of Conduct for Members (updated in 2016) available on the Council's website, intranet site (CeriNet) under Councillor Resources, and in the Constitution.
- Members Code of Conduct Flowchart (updated in 2016).
- Code of Conduct for Officers* (review completed and updated Code published April 2023) available along with all Corporate policies and strategies via Council website/CeriNet and Staff News update for CeriNet being prepared to inform Staff of changes.
- Mandatory Induction and follow-up training on Code of Conduct and ethics provided to all Members.
- A comprehensive Induction programme for all Councillors undertaken following the Local Elections in 2022.
- Ethics/Fraud training provided in collaboration with Council's insurer at Corporate Managers' quarterly workshop 2021 forming a basis for e-learning module for all Staff (e-learning training content completed, to be created into e-learning training module shortly).
- Internal Audit ('IA') & Governance Services working with Learning & Development have prepared scenarios for training. Training supported by recent review of Council's Strategy on Counter-Fraud, Corruption & Bribery (to include Anti-Money Laundering).
- Day to day advice is provided by the Monitoring Officer ('MO') and Scrutiny Support Officer.
- Disciplinary Policy (Nov 2017). (due for review 24/25)

- Survey of members training and development needs carried out annually.
- Register of Members interests, available from the Council's Democratic Services, reviewed by MO. Register of Members' Interests also published on the Council website.
- All Councillors completed Personal / Confidential Data Agreement.
- Declaration of Interest and Hospitality forms for Officers and Members on CeriNet.
- Monitoring and review by MO of Chief Officers' declarations annually.
- MO advises Chief Officers and Members on need to declare close personal associations with other Officers or Members.
- MO advising of Officers regarding declarations of interest is ongoing. Regular reminders through News Updates on CeriNet system and at Leadership Group.
- NFI match highlights Staff who are directors of companies that have dealings with the Council – any non-declarations investigated by IA and reported to MO.
- Declaration of interest process to be extended to include requirement regarding related parties: that officers and Members declare if they are closely related to other Officers, Members or teachers. Specific declaration/return required stating whether this includes a Chief Officer (and to state relationship).
- Declaration of interest process to be extended to include requirement that Members specify Directorships - company name and number, (un)remunerated, private interest or Council appointment.
MO to remind Members of the need to accurately disclose all Directorships (including dormant companies).
- Declaration of interest process to be extended to include requirement that Members specify role within memberships - observer, member, volunteer, Committee member, Board member or Trustee.
- Officers' declaration of interest to include requirement to declare if they or a close family member, or any person or organisation acting on their behalf, are on the Board, management committee or other controlling group of an organisation with which the Council has significant dealings.
- Training to be provided on the role of Members on External Bodies.
- MO to undertake enquiries with company secretaries as necessary to ascertain basis of Members trustee/Directorship interests within charitable organisations or companies, and rationale. To seek amendment of Articles of Association or resignation of Council directorships if necessary.
- Members required to update Register of Interests in accordance with the Code of Conduct, and in addition, annually, which is opportunity to reference any close personal associates/roles etc. Additionally, declarations of interest made by members at meetings. This includes lay/independent members.
- Politically Restricted Post Register for Officers maintained and Political Restrictions on Local Government Employees Policy available to employees on CeriNet. Register of Politically Restricted Posts published on Council website.
- Dispensations forms for members updated in 2022.
- MO meets with political group leaders quarterly to consider their new duties to uphold standards of conduct of Members in their group.
- Political group leaders to cooperate with the Ethics and Standards Committee as required in pursuance of their new duties.
- Political group leaders to complete template setting out actions undertaken to evidence compliance with their new duties.
- Local Resolution Procedure for Members: ungrouped/unaffiliated Member receives Council Chair/Vice Chair' advice/support.

- The Ethics and Standards Committee has received training on its new duties (from May 2022) under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 ('2021 Act').
- The Terms of Reference of the Development Management Committee (formerly Development Control Committee) have been revised to clearly state its purpose, role and responsibilities, and how it links to Corporate Priorities.
- The Operational Procedures document for the Development Management Committee has been revised. A 'cooling-off' process has been established in order to review planning applications, which may, if approved, be a significant departure from policy.
- The Scheme of Delegations contains criteria for applications, which must be referred to the Development Management Committee, and those applications that can be delegated to the Corporate Lead Officer.
- A Protocol for Good Practice for Councillors at Development Management Committee has been produced and included in the Constitution.
- A good working relationship exists with all key regulators.
- The Constitution is subject to regular reviews, with ongoing updates as required, including presenting proposed changes to Cross Party Constitution Working Group, to make recommendations on changes to Constitution to Council. MO/Governance Officer report to Council to update delegations and Constitution.
- The Corporate Strategy 2022-2027 includes Corporate Well-being Objectives setting out the Council's priorities and high-level objectives with supporting actions on an annual basis.
- The Well-being and Improvement Objectives build on the priority areas identified in the Corporate Strategy 2022-2027 and are reviewed annually. These are developed in consultation with the public and Members.
- Members' standards and conduct matters considered by the Council's Ethics and Standards Committee. Public meetings held regularly, and chaired by an independent person-determine dispensations, and consider strategic/policy issues and receive updates from PSOW Findings & APW cases. Committee and Members are advised by the MO & Standards Officer.
- Annual Ethics & Standards Committee Report reported to Council in October 2022.
- Governance & Audit Committee meets regularly to consider governance and external regulator reports. Chaired by Lay Person, per 2021 Act provisions.
- Governance and Audit Committee carry out a benchmarking exercise annually to provide further assurance on the review of the Annual Governance Statement ('AGS') process. IA review and report on the process annually.
- Effective 'Strategy to Counter Fraud, Corruption and Bribery (to include Anti-Money Laundering)' in place (updated June 2021).
- Internal Audit Annual Report on Counter Fraud presented to Governance and Audit Committee at year-end. 2021/22 report presented 6.6.22 and 2022/23 report presented 21.6.23.
- Ethics Audit undertaken during 2019. Follow up Internal Audit of Council's arrangements regarding ethics also in progress.
- Whistleblowing Policy available to Employees and Contractors (has been reviewed, updated, presented to Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee (recommended to approve), approved by Cabinet and published on CeriNet 17.4.2023).
- A mandatory E-learning training module on Whistleblowing must be completed by all Staff.

- Revised Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy published 1.10.2021.
- All complaints are dealt with in accordance with the corporate procedures which include informal and formal stages and these are communicated to Staff on a regular basis.
- The complaints system is monitored by the Corporate Complaints and Freedom of Information Manager.
- Annual Complaints Report considered by the Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet prior to approval by Council. Includes Lessons Learned from complaints received.
- Agenda/Minutes for all committees published on the Council's Website, including disclosures of interests.
- Cabinet Decision Notices published on the Council's Website.
- Preparation for publication of delegated decisions register ongoing.
- Register of Contracts published on Council Website.

Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values

- Ethics and Standards Committee championing ethical compliance to ensure that public have trust and confidence that Members and Officers work to highest ethical and moral standards.
- The Ethics and Standards Committee has been proactive, leading on training sessions and putting procedures in place for dispensation arrangements. The structure has recently been reviewed to improve efficiency and effectiveness.
- Officers such as Internal Auditors, sign an annual Code of Ethics affirmation.
- Follow up Internal Audit of Council's arrangements regarding ethics also in progress.
- Carmarthen County Council undertook an independent audit of ethics within the Council during 2019. Follow up Internal Audit of Council's arrangements regarding ethics in progress.
- Employee Handbook is reviewed annually, is available on CeriNet, sets out the expected Employee behaviour and includes the Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees.
- Training on equality and diversity and recruitment and selection including equal opportunities is provided for all Ceredigion County Council Managers.
- Training on equality and diversity is provided to all Councillors.
- All Staff must complete an e-learning module on Equality & Diversity.
- Standard Terms and Conditions for all Suppliers of Goods and services include conditions relating to Equality and Diversity and are available on the Council's website.
- Procurement Strategy 2018-2022 was approved by Council 19th June 2018. Task and Finish Group established December 2023 to consider Procurement & Commissioning Strategy 2024
- Procurement training also being rolled out to Staff.
- Council Recruitment Policy and DBS Policy.
- Training Needs Analysis Questionnaire has been circulated by Council newsletter to Staff requesting opinion on ethical culture of Council & training module planned in response to feedback.
- All Group Leaders signed Diversity in Democracy Declaration in September 2021.

Respecting the rule of law

- Council Constitution.
- Terms of reference are included in the Constitution.
- Consideration is being given to the Data Protection Principles, and processing of personal information in the context of Council Committees and all Members.
- Training for all Members on Introduction for Council, including GDPR.
- Statutory powers and legal implications included in every decision-making Cabinet report.
- Legal and Financial advice/implications is provided on all appropriate reports for decision.
- The MO and Legal Services and the IA Service are available to advise as appropriate.
- The MO attends Leadership Group/Cabinet/Council meetings and routinely attends many public meetings, as required, subject to availability. In the absence of the MO, the Deputy MO will attend Cabinet and Council meetings.
- The MO has direct access to the CE and reports to Council generally and as part of statutory duty.
- The MO operates an 'open' door policy for Members wishing to receive 'conduct' and 'governance' advice.
- Job descriptions & person specifications clearly define the roles and responsibilities required of posts.
- Members' Role descriptions set out their respective responsibilities.
- Compliance with CIPFA's Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (CIPFA, published 13 April 2016). (No further update)
- Compliance with CIPFA's Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit in Public Service Organisations (CIPFA, published 9 April 2019) & contribution published in CIPFA's accompanying Putting Principles into Practice document (2019).
- Financial Regulations and Financial Procedure Rules (Document F Constitution).
- Contract Procedure Rules (Document G in the Council's Constitution).
- Compliance with Specific Codes e.g. Internal Auditors' Public Sector Internal Audit Standards ('PSIAS', March 2017)
- Members of Governance and Audit Committee updated on fraud including IA annual counter fraud report.
- Statutory Officers accountable to the Chief Executive ('CE') and the Council.
- Regular meetings between CE, S.151 Officer & MO.
- Corporate Manager – Internal Audit ('CMIA') has free & unfettered access to Members and Officers at all levels, and right of access as per Council's Constitution and Internal Audit Charter.
- Two Officers in the IA team are accredited Counter Fraud Technicians.
- An Officer in the IA team holds a CIPFA Certificate in Investigative Practices ('CCIP').
- Council complies with Audit Wales's annual National Fraud Initiative requirements, currently co-ordinated by Internal Audit.
- Monitoring and response to fraud alerts (NAFN, wider networks, peers, etc).
- Membership and active participation in professional networks and groups (Tisonline, KHub, etc).

- Nominated Council Officers undertake various fraud training to maintain knowledge and expertise.
- Where appropriate, successful prosecutions publicised on Council website (and in local press).

B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement:

Openness

- All Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings open to the public and agendas and papers published on the Council website (with the exception of exempt reports exempt information as defined by the 1972 Local Government Act).
- Council and Cabinet meetings are broadcasted.
- In accordance with the requirements of the LGEW Act 2021, arrangements were made to enable hybrid meetings to be held from May 2022. New equipment has been installed in the Chamber. Council and Cabinet meetings are being broadcasted on the Council's Facebook pages. Members of the public can attend to view meetings remotely or in person.
- All Statutory Annual Reports, Statements of Accounts and Improvement Progress Reports are all published within timescales and are available on the Council's website.
- Freedom of Information Act publication scheme. (to be reviewed in 2024)
- A host of service areas are available online including council tax self-service and information.
- The Council's goals and values are set out in the Corporate Strategy 2022-2027.
- Ceredigion County Council Website.
- MO and Ethics & Standards generic email addresses created.
- Regular and timely responses to the press and other enquiries to Management and members as well as comprehensive FOI responses.
- Review of the FOI Publication scheme in progress.
- Freedom of Information Policy (March 2018).(to be updated in 2024)
- Corporate Complaints and Freedom of Information Manager in post.
- Complaints and Freedom of Information Privacy Notice.
- An Overview and Scrutiny Public Engagement Protocol (2018) (Document N Constitution) has been approved by Council and has been used on several occasions. No further update
- Protocol for speaking at the Development Management Committee in place (Part 4 Document I Constitution).
- Protocol for access by Cabinet Members to Overview and Scrutiny Committee approved by Council (Part 5 Document M2 Constitution).
- Integrated Impact Assessment ('IIA') tool and guidance to inform effective decision making have been developed and are being implemented.
- Council / Cabinet report template updated to include reference to legal implications, staffing implications, property / asset implications and risks and to reflect the new Corporate Strategy 2022 - 2027.
- Standard templates and guidance for reporting to Council, Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committees are used and all include the IIA results.
- A Protocol is in place for working relationships between Members and Officers (e.g. Officer-Member Protocol). (The Constitution Part 5).

- A calendar of dates of meetings including forward work programmes of the Council, Cabinet and Committees are published on the Council's website.
- Organisational Awareness training available as an optional module of the Corporate Manager Programme, which includes information relating to the decision-making process, Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, Equalities, Welsh Language and the use of the IIAs.
- The Engagement and Consultation Checklist assists with decision making around whether or not to undertake a consultation regarding a proposed change and guidance on dissemination of consultation results is available to Officers.
- IIA conclusions reported to Council, Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny. 13 IIAs went to Cabinet during 2022-23.
- The Council, in collaboration with partners, has carried out significant engagement to produce the Public Service Board's ('PSB') Well-being Assessment and Local Well-being Plan.
- Well-being objectives for 2022-23 have been set in order to deliver the Corporate Strategy 2022-2027.
- Corporate Complaints Policy has been reviewed, new Policy presented to Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee 7.7.21 and to Council 23.9.2021, and Revised Concerns and Complaints Policy and Procedures 2021, its implementation and publication approved by Council.
- Social Services Complaints Policy and Procedure has been reviewed.
- Consultation Decision making tool (Consultation Tree and flowchart) have been developed and includes the use of feedback.
- Consultations are published on the Corporate section of the Council Website.
- Consultations are promoted through social media.
- Guidance has been issued on the Ceredigion Council intranet to all Staff to follow with regards to the dissemination of feedback to decision makers. Recent indications are that significant progress is being made in this area by Officers.

Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders

- Public Services Board Terms of Reference available on the Council Website and PSB Project Groups Terms of Reference available. Scrutiny arrangements for the PSB have been put in place.
- Joint engagement and consultation exercises are held. Collaborative projects are running with institutional stakeholders with clear governance arrangements in place.
- Engagement with Service Users List including stakeholders with whom the authority should engage is in place and Engagement and Participation Policy.
- Collaboration Standards for New Strategic Projects Guidance and Templates are available.

Partnerships Include:

- PSB;
- West Wales Regional Partnership Board;
- Community Safety Partnership;
- Mid and West Wales Safeguarding Board; and
- Growing Mid Wales.
- Partnerships such as Growing Mid Wales have been established with governance arrangements. Growing Mid Wales Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been established.

- Regular reporting of partnership meetings and activity to Leadership Group and Cabinet.
- Partnership metrics are subject to internal review, where appropriate.
- Legal Team is actively involved in drafting and reviewing Terms of Reference for Inter Authority Agreements ('IAAs') and formal committees.
- A suite of documents have been developed that relate to strategic collaboration projects that the Authority is considering entering into. The documents include guidance, standards and numerous templates for varying stages of collaboration projects.

Engaging stakeholders effectively, including individual citizens and service users

- A new Engagement and Participation Policy for Ceredigion County Council, 'Talking, Listening and Working Together,' has been prepared and was agreed through the democratic process in Autumn 2022.
- A Community Engagement, Consultations and Partnerships Page has been created on CeriNet, which includes links to Engagement and Participation Policy, Engagement and Consultation Checklist, Engagement with Service Users and Consultation Decision Making Tool.
- All IAAs for Cabinet are assessed by the Equalities and Inclusion Manager, including whether effective engagement, involvement and consultation has taken place and informed strategic decision-making process.
- Public Engagement Tool Kit.
- IIA Tool Kit.
- Summary reports on consultation and engagement activities are reported back to Members and service users.
- We have worked in partnership with Local Authorities and Public Services across Mid and West Wales on the review of our Strategic Equality Plans. A joint question set and engagement and consultation framework was produced and as a result, feedback was obtained from people with protected characteristics.
- Minutes of engagement groups with people with protected characteristics.
- Effective Community involvement carried out with the well-being assessment work.
- Effective Community involvement carried out with service users from different backgrounds to inform the new Strategic Equality Plan.
- Corporate Communications Protocol in place which is periodically reviewed.
- Dissemination of consultation results and reports on completed consultations and engagement exercises are posted on the Council's public consultations webpage in order to provide feedback to the public.
- Processes have been introduced to monitor feedback e.g. any consultation/engagement reports are presented to Scrutiny and Cabinet to inform their decision-making.
- Feedback from engagement and how people's views have been taken into account is recorded in the IAAs.
- A Well-being assessment (PSB) has been carried out that will inform the development of the PSB's Local Well-being Plan, which was approved by Council on 20.4.2023 (Ceredigion Local Well-being Plan 2023-2028).
- An annual report on progress made against the Council's Well-being objectives and Corporate priorities is published on the Council Website.

- UNCRC – United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child have been adopted by the Council.
- Participation Standards have been adopted by Council.

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

Defining outcomes

- The Council's Corporate Well-being Objectives are included in the Council's Corporate Strategy 2022-2027 and are reviewed each year and reported in the Self-assessment and Annual Review of Performance and Well-being Objectives Annual Report published on the Ceredigion County Council website.
- The purpose and the vision of the Council have been determined by Council and is contained in the Corporate Strategy 2022-2027. This strategy illustrates how the authority will support and promote the well-being of the citizens of Ceredigion.
- All Planning arrangements reflect the Golden Thread and make the links to Corporate plans including;
 - Business Plans;
 - Strategic Plan;
 - Corporate Performance Management Reporting; and
 - Well-being and Improvement Objectives.
- Performance information is outlined in the Council's Self-assessment and Annual Review of Performance and Well-being Objectives Annual Report.
- Business Plans are prepared on an annual basis and are monitored quarterly by a Performance Board, which includes Cabinet members and the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee.
- Budget setting subject to detailed scrutiny by the five Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- The Medium-Term Financial Plan is in place.
- Quarterly performance arrangements provide a challenge protocol to ensure outcomes are delivered.
- Business planning process includes resource allocation.
- Corporate performance management arrangements include quarterly assessment of risks to the achievement of outcomes or service delivery.
- includes risk logs for;
 - Business Plans (Level 1); and
 - Service Plans (Level 2).
- Local performance measures are included in Business and service delivery plans.
- Capital Plans include;
 - Rights of Way;
 - Highways;
 - Annual Budget Plan; and
 - Transformation.
- The Risk Management Policy and Strategy and the Risk Management Framework was approved by Cabinet on 24 September 2019.
- Risk Management training to be rolled out to Members and Senior Managers.

- Risk management e-learning package has been developed for all other Staff and training took place in 2019, with workshop with insurers arranged for senior Managers.
- Publication of service performance, including costs and value for money data is routinely considered within service reports.

Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

- The appointed Auditor considers the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness. In his letter he has stated that the Council has complied with its responsibilities to the use of its resources.
- The most recent Audit of the Council's Improvement Plan (2020-2021) was issued in November 2020. The report concluded positively that the Council discharged its duties and has acted in accordance with Welsh Government guidance sufficiently to discharge its duties.
- A capital appraisal form is completed for new capital projects, which covers the requirement for the project, and is used to assess value for money and the revenue implications of major projects.
- Capital Investment Strategy is contained within the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- The Authority has undertaken the following steps towards the implementation of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:
 - Prepared well-being objectives and statement;
 - Embedded the Well-being Goals and Sustainable; development principal into the business planning process.
 - Developed a new IIA tool and guidance;
 - Established a Well-being of Future Generations Act group and action plan;
 - The Constitution is continually monitored and reviewed;
 - PSB assessment of Local Well-being published in March 2017;
 - Scrutiny arrangements agreed for PSB;
 - Cabinet Reports, to include the Social/economic/ environmental impact assessment;
 - A mandatory e-learning module on the Act has been developed and promoted to all Council Staff;
 - an Equality, community and Welsh language Impact Assessment must be undertaken on all school restructuring proposals as required under the Welsh Government School Organisation Code; and
- Members have contributed to The Future Generations Officer Scrutiny Framework in relation to the WFGA.
- Wales procurement policy statement is aligned to the Council's Procurement Strategy 2018-2022.
- The Council wide WFGA Group Action Plan.
- Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024.
- Welsh Language Standards in place and are monitored by the Welsh Language Policy Officer.
- Annual Welsh Language Standards monitoring report presented to Cabinet and published on the Council website.
- A mandatory E-learning training module on Welsh Language Awareness must be completed by all Staff.
- Members provided with Welsh Language Awareness and Equalities Training as part of their Induction Programme.

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

Determining interventions

- The IIA tool and guidance is available and training has been rolled out for Officers and Members.
- Corporate project management group has been established to formalise project development and management.
- Standard reporting templates are used in decision making process.
- Organisational Awareness training available as an optional module of the Corporate Manager Programme, which includes information relating to the decision-making process, Wellbeing of Future Generations, Equalities, Welsh Language and the use of the IIAs, Head of Democratic Services and MO (CLO-Legal & Governance) advise as necessary.
- Risk Management Policy, Strategy and Framework with training programme for Members, Senior Management and Managers, published on CeriNet and available to all Members of Staff. Documents amended to reflect additional risks and background information to make informed decisions. Corporate Risk Register reported regularly to Governance and Audit Committee.
- Medium Term Financial Strategy has been regularly updated.
- Consultation decision tree tool includes a guidance section on dissemination of consultation results.
- Finance challenge regarding savings on Council Website.

Planning interventions

- Corporate Performance Management arrangements include quarterly:
 - Weekly leadership Group meetings;
 - Quarterly reporting of progress against level 1 Business Plans;
 - Quarterly Performance Board meetings; and
 - Quarterly Executive Panel Meetings.
- A calendar is used to report deadlines and Board/Executive Panel dates are published with reports.
- All major collaboration projects have established governance and management arrangements including risk management.
- All projects considered by Corporate Project Management Panel, which is also attended by IA and is an effective forum for advice/challenge and highlighting risks as Service areas develop projects, including collaboration projects.
- The Corporate Project Management Panel helps ensure projects give early consideration to: the Well Being and Future Generations Act; to other guidance; to finance, procurement, governance and legal arrangements; to HR implications; Health & Safety; and Audit. Improve project arrangements prior to reporting to the Development Group and other authorisation processes. This also helps identify capital requirements for inclusion in future capital programmes.
- Ensuring Staff with project management skills are available.
- Account will be taken of legislative changes e.g. work is ongoing in relation to implementing legislative changes such as LGEW 2021 Act changes and considering/monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively, including shared risks. Meetings are being held and preparation being carried

out, for example, regarding the 2021 Act's requirement for Corporate Joint Committees, including potential and shared risks (a CJC group has been established, with the first meeting held on 19th April 2021, to consider the requirement to establish the Mid Wales CJC in accordance with the 2021 Act).

- Appropriate Joint Scrutiny arrangements are in place in relation to the Growing Mid Wales Board. Similarly, the Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee will have Sub appropriate arrangements in place (Joint Scrutiny, Standards and Governance and Audit Committee)- arrangements in compliance with legislation and its Standing Orders.
- Local performance indicators have been established and approved for each service element and included in the service plan and are reported upon regularly.
- The Business Planning process for 2022-23 is being implemented with Level 1 Business Plans shared with the Performance and Research Team.
- Performance measures have been identified within each Level 1 Business Plan that have in turn translate into the reporting Dashboard for each service. These measures have been closely scrutinised and have received final sign-off from senior leadership. Services report against these measures as part of the performance management process for the year.
- Business Plans include budget and finance information and form part of the quarterly Corporate Performance Management arrangements.
- Budget Framework in place.
- Service Accountancy – Budget monitoring takes place.
- Financial Regulations and Financial Procedure Rules (Document F Constitution) along with Budgetary Control Guidance are all up to date. Chief Officer Assurance Statements. The internal controls in place are subject to regular review by Internal Audit, in accordance with the annual risk-based audit plan.
- Changes through the corporate savings plan have been through a robust governance process to ensure that all savings all link to the desired outcome.
- Community Benefits is embedded in our Processes and Policies and has been regularly applied, monitored and reported upon. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act is integrated into our processes.

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

Developing the entity's capacity

- Corporate and line management induction is now in place. Corporate induction and Corporate Manager Development plans were introduced in April 2018 and revised in October 2022. Corporate induction sessions are part of these requirements, all new Staff must attend an induction session. Senior Managers present within these face-to-face or virtual sessions.
- CeriNet (the HR intranet and resource to Staff and management) is continually reviewed and improved for effectiveness.
- Learning & Development is now managed via the Ceri system offering opportunities to all Staff.
- Ongoing annual Personal Performance scheme – Performance Reviews link to Corporate and strategic objectives.
- The Corporate Performance Management arrangements provide the forum for performance management's needs and thereafter preparing action plans for

delivery of corporate improvements in performance review of Staff. These have been further strengthened with the introduction of annual appraisals for all Staff via the Ceri HR system.

- A comprehensive induction programme is provided for all Members following the Local Elections in 2022. Ongoing training is arranged for specific issues e.g. Treasury management.
- Members attend various events, seminars and conferences (see above).
- Survey of members training and development needs carried out annually.
- Utilisation of research and benchmarking exercises.
- The Ceri HR payroll system has ensured that meaningful data on Staff is now available to Managers on a monthly basis in order to monitor costs turnover and absence.
- Effective operation of partnerships which deliver agreed outcomes.
- Effective Partnerships have been developed in a number of areas and services including:
 - School Improvement;
 - Health & Social care; and
 - Waste.
- Additional partnerships are included in the strategic Collaboration Projects List.
- Strategic workforce planning is undertaken utilising the Strategic workforce planning tool kit and is completed by all service areas. The Workforce Plan 2023-2028 is currently being developed and will be published once approved by Cabinet in Autumn 2023. Once in place, annual updates on progress of the workforce plan are reported to scrutiny.

Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals

- The Leadership and Senior Officer structure has defined these roles, including how they integrate with each other.
- Joint meeting of senior Managers ensures that roles, responsibilities and accountabilities are clear.
- Job descriptions clearly define the roles and responsibilities required of posts.
- The Constitution sets out the roles and responsibilities of Members (Part 3.4 Table 4) and senior Officers (part 2 Article 2)
- The Strategic Planning Toolkit includes an element of succession planning and talent management.
- Learning and Development opportunities are offered to those within a Leadership role or who are aspiring leaders.
- A Scheme of Delegation (The Constitution Part 3.5) exists and clearly sets out responsibilities for Members and Officers.
- Protocols are in place for working relationships between Members and Officers (e.g. Officer-Member Protocol).
- Codes of Conduct for Officers and Members are in place.
- Member Officer working groups in place and working effectively.
- Contract Procedure Rules ('CPR') (Part 4 Document G Constitution) and Financial Regulations and accompanying financial procedures (Part 4 Document F Constitution) are reviewed on a regular basis e.g. CPR updated March 2019.
- The Council's Constitution sets out the functions and responsibilities of the Leader and Chief Executive.
- The Corporate structure of the Council has been established to ensure that the Statutory Officers are able to perform their roles effectively.

- The CE is responsible for reviewing this structure, as necessary.
- Democratic Services Committee agreed the revised set of Member Role Descriptions, designed to be used alongside Welsh member Development (Competency) Framework, of Welsh Local Government Association ('WLGA') Framework.
- Member Role Descriptions and Person Specifications presented to Council.
- Comprehensive Induction Programme for all Members undertaken following the Local Elections 2022.
- Access to courses/information briefings on new legislation.
- Provision of opportunities for ongoing skills and refresher training for Officers.
- Members Workshops arranged, as necessary.
- Personal reviews for Officers.
- Survey of members training and development needs carried out annually.
- Development/training done as part of person specifications for key finance and legal posts (mandatory qualification, job requirements).
- Induction and Corporate Manager Development plans are in place.
- E-learning packages are regularly being developed and rolled out for mandatory and non-mandatory training for staff and Members.
- Performance Reviews are undertaken by all Staff as part of the Ceri system Performance Management module.
- The Corporate Performance Management arrangements provide the forum for performance management's needs and thereafter preparing action plans for delivery of corporate improvements in performance review of Staff.
- Induction programme is provided for new Members and new comprehensive induction programme has been provided post-election (from May 2022) with additional e-learning modules available. Ongoing training is arranged for specific issues. Members attend various events, seminars and conferences (see above).
- Scrutiny self-assessment undertaken annually.
- Succession planning is undertaken through discussions and actions within service areas and with partners this cannot always be evidenced. This will be further developed through the strategic workforce planning toolkit.
- Ceredigion Manager Programme offers personal development including governance arrangements and organisational knowledge.
- Members are encouraged and supported to complete Annual Reports, which are published on the Council's website.
- Chair of the Democratic Services Committee attends the National Network, facilitated by the WLGA.
- Chair of Governance and Audit Committee attends All Wales Governance and Audit Committee Chair's Networking Meetings to develop and compare role within Local Authorities.
- Staff development plans linked to appraisals have been strengthened with the introduction of the Performance Management module in Ceri.
- Implementing appropriate Human Resource policies and ensuring that they are working effectively.
- Smoke-Free Workplace Policy.
- Alcohol and Drug Misuse Policy.
- The Council has introduced a range of resources and options to enhance the health and well-being of Staff.
- Health and Well-being Strategy 2021-2026 has been introduced to support the improvement in the workforce health and well-being.

- The Council has appointed an Employee Health & Wellbeing Officer to coordinate and promote health and wellbeing within the workforce.
- A Care First employee assistance package has been introduced that offers:
- Counselling service; and
- Advice on financial, legal, consumer, eldercare, childcare and employment issues.
- Other support available for Staff includes:
 - Cognitive Behaviour Therapy Interactive health and wellbeing programme;
 - Eyecare scheme;
 - Childcare voucher scheme;
 - Iechyd Da; and
 - Mindfulness training for Staff and Managers.
- Counselling service is also available to Members.

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

Managing risk

- The Corporate Risk Management Framework and the Risk Management Policy and Strategy were approved by Cabinet on the 24th of September 2019 and continue to be updated.
- The Corporate Risk Register is considered at all Leadership Group, Corporate Lead Officers, Corporate Performance Management meetings and by the Governance and Audit Committee as a standing item. The Committee refers matters to Scrutiny Committees, where appropriate. This provides ongoing information and assurance that risks continue to be managed.
- All Risks are allocated to a Corporate Lead Officer (Risk Owner).
- Specific Project Risk Monitoring is undertaken.
- Risk Management is integral to operational business planning Policy and Strategy setting.
- Project and transformation Risks are all logged.
- All Plans included Risk logs including:
 - The Medium-term Financial Plan;
 - Business Plans (level 1); and
 - Service Plans (level 2).
- Corporate Risk Management arrangements are audited regularly.
- The management of risks is included in individual Services service/establishment audit programmes.
- 'Risks' form the basis of Internal Audit's audit programmes of work, as required by the Pentana audit management software system. Cabinet report template expanded to include risks and implications arising.

Managing performance

- Corporate performance management is linked to the Well-being and Improvement Objectives, Corporate Strategy 2022-2027 and the PSB's plans. The Council also has many local indicators which helps it determine whether it has achieved the priorities in its Corporate Strategy 2022-2027.

- Council approved the Self-assessment and Annual Review of Performance and Well-being Objectives Annual Report 2021-22.
- Benchmarking information carried out as part of service re-modelling.
- External & internal assessments by:
 - Audit Wales;
 - Estyn;
 - Care Inspectorate Wales ('CSIW'); Investigatory Powers' Commissioner's Office ('IPCO'); and
 - Information Commissioner's Office ('ICO').
- Self-Assessment (Governance and Audit Committee) - self-assessment exercise discussed at 28.11.22 workshop and will be carried out in 2023.
- Individual Services carry out self-assessment through a performance matrix.
- IA undertake an annual self-assessment and have a 5-yearly independent external assessment / peer review as required by the PSIAS. The external assessor concluded that Ceredigion County Council's Internal Audit function generally conforms with the PSIAS. With the function currently conforming to 50 of the best practice areas, partial conformance in six areas and no areas of non-conformance.
- A Corporate Performance Management Panel meets quarterly. All Corporate Lead Officers report to this Panel and the Dates for reporting are published in the report. The Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees attend with the principle that they can identify areas that require inclusion on their respective Forward Work Programmes.
- Chief Officers provide support and advice to Members and advice provided by Chief Finance Officer and MO.
- Scrutiny arrangements are in place which provide opportunities to challenge decision making and review the provision of services. The scrutiny function's aim is to provide added value to the continuous improvement agenda in their role as "critical friend". In addition, Overview and Scrutiny Committees also provide opportunities to undertake pre-decision and policy development work, which is a function of scrutiny, which has developed over recent years. The Council's aim is to scrutinise, where possible, before decisions are made.
- Overview and Scrutiny Committees can instigate Task and Finish Groups to investigate and research a matter further prior to reporting back to the relevant Committee.
- Training for Members on the role of Scrutiny and Scrutiny Chair and Vice Chair training provided.
- The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee is responsible for taking an overview of the overall effectiveness of the PSB.
- Work undertaken with the Future Generations Office to develop a Scrutiny Framework in relation to the WFGA.
- A Corporate Performance Management Board meets each quarter, with Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees invited to attend.
- Reporting dates are set at beginning of each year.
- Transformation and Risks are all referred to joint Local Government meetings and Panels.
- Financial monitoring is regularly undertaken throughout the Council under a devolved accountancy arrangement and formal reporting is made to Cabinet. Monitoring is also incorporated into the quarterly performance management reports.

- Accounting practices - Codes of Practice are complied with. Prudential Indicators are prepared and reported to Council and monitored throughout the year. Regular budget monitoring takes place throughout the year. IA also reviews controls over income collection and monitoring.
- Business/Service plans are monitored to ensure delivery outcomes are achieved.

Robust internal control

- Risk Management Policy and Strategy and the Risk Management Framework were approved by Cabinet on 24 September 2019.
- Updates in relation to Business Continuity and Civil Contingencies arrangements submitted on a regular basis in line with the Corporate Risk Register, Risk CORP04.
- Business Continuity and Civil Contingencies Group meet quarterly.
- Regular meetings of the Emergency and Business Continuity Management Group take place to review Corporate and Service Area Emergency and Business Continuity Arrangements and Plans as well as recommendations arising from past incidents and exercises to evidence risk, identify emerging trends, and document any lessons learnt for follow up.
- The annual Internal Audit Plan is risk-assessed and takes account of Council aims and objectives, and corporate policies and procedures; to include a review of the Risk Management corporate arrangements, and testing the mitigating controls in place for a sample of risks noted in the Corporate Risk Register
- Internal Audit Strategy & Annual Plan 2022-2023 approved by Governance and Audit Committee 10 March 2022, & continues to take account of additional risks presented by the pandemic. The IA Plan for 2023-24 was presented to and approved by GAC on the 9 March 2023.
- IA's annual audit plan can address any necessary re-prioritisation of work, allowing IA to be reactive to any changes in risk within the Council.
- Regular Quarterly Internal Audit Progress Reports to Governance and Audit Committee for monitoring (e.g. Internal Audit Progress Report for period 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2022 presented to Governance & Audit Committee on 17 January 2023, period 1 October – 31 December presented to GAC 9 March 2023 and period 1 January – 31 March presented to GAC 21 June 2023).
- Internal audit reports issued to Managers highlight the risks of not implementing any IA recommended actions. Fundamental & significant recommended actions are followed up as part of IA's Management Action Programme and reported to Governance and Audit Committee on a 6-monthly basis. If CMIA considers that any fundamental risks have not been addressed by a Manager this is reported to Governance and Audit Committee who has the discretion of requesting that Manager to attend & explain reasoning for non-compliance.
- Summary of work and audit opinion on assurance provided annually in Internal Audit Annual Report at year-end. IA Annual Report for 2021/22 approved by Governance & Audit Committee 6 June 2022. IA Annual report for 2022/23 approved by GAC 21 June 2023.
- Follow-up IA reviews to monitor implementation of required actions as part of the Management Actions Programme.
- Internal controls, risk & governance processes are monitored according to the Internal Audit Charter (last version approved by Governance & Audit Committee 17/1/23) & the Annual Internal Audit Strategy and Plan.

- The appointed Auditor considers the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in his letter he has stated that the Council has complied with its responsibilities to the use of its resources.
- Risk evaluation always appears on agendas.
- Compliance with the Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption ('CIPFA', 2014). (no further update)
- Internal Auditors have procedures in place if fraud discovered.
- Two Officers in the IA team are accredited Counter Fraud Technicians.
- An officer) in the IA team holds a CIPFA Certificate in Investigative Practices ('CCIP').
- 'Strategy to Counter Fraud, Corruption and Bribery (to include Anti-Money Laundering)' updated and approved by Council 17 June 2021 (minutes confirmed 23 September 2021) has been written with regard to the Code of Practice & updated to ensure all requirements are included.
- IA undertakes counter fraud work where required (as well as dealing with the discovery of fraud as considered earlier).
- Council complies with Audit Wales's annual National Fraud Initiative requirements, currently co-ordinated by IA.
- IA presents Counter-Fraud Report to Governance and Audit Committee annually (2021/22 Counter-Fraud Report presented to Governance & Audit Committee on 6 June 2022). 2022/23 Counter-Fraud Report presented to GAC on 21 June 2023.
- Monitoring and response to fraud alerts (NAFN, wider networks, peers, etc);
- Membership and active participation in professional networks and groups (Tisonline, KHub, etc);
- IA offer advice to services on implementation of new systems and processes to ensure effective internal controls maintained;
- Nominated Council Officers undertake various fraud training to maintain knowledge and expertise;
- Where appropriate, successful prosecutions publicised on Council website (and in local press)
- IA's annual audit plan can address any necessary re-prioritisation of work, allowing IA to be reactive to any changes in risk within the Council.
- The AGS contains the CMIA's annual opinion on assurance.
- The IA function is headed by a CMIA who is currently studying to gain an IIA qualification, they have considerable audit & local government experience, and are supported by a team with appropriate knowledge and skills. Regular reporting to Governance and Audit Committee on the activity of IA is undertaken. Robust risk-based forward work programme and business planning is in place.
- IA evaluates and improves the effectiveness of risk management, control & governance processes in accordance with PSIAS, which is self-assessed and reported to Governance and Audit Committee annually along with any improvements required. A peer review is undertaken every 5 years the most recent having been completed in May 2022. The report and resulting action plan were presented to Governance & Audit Committee on 27 September 2022.
- IA provides an individual assurance to Managers after each audit review – these are then used to provide an overall corporate level of assurance annually, which feeds in to the AGS.
- A re-structure of IA was implemented in May 2019, and another in November 2020. The service has been fully resourced since 1 June 2022.

- Three members of the team are currently pursuing the Institute of Internal Auditors' professional training qualification.
- Governance and Audit Committee self-assessment - self-assessment exercise underway
- Regular meetings between CMIA and Chair of Governance and Audit Committee.
- Meetings as necessary between MO & Chair of Governance and Audit Committee.
- Regular meetings between MO & CMIA.
- Regular meetings between MO, CMIA & Audit Wales when necessary.
- Regular Meetings between Governance and Audit Committee Members and external regulator Audit Wales (with and without Officers).

Managing data

- ICT and Digital Strategy for 2018-2022 has been approved.
- All policies are up to date including; (all approved in February 2019).
 - Data Protection & GDPR Policy (updated in 2023)
 - Information Security Policy; (to be updated 2024) and
 - Records Management Policy. (to be updated 2024)
- A mandatory E-learning training module on Information Security must be completed by all Staff.
- A mandatory E-learning training module on Data Protection must be completed by all Staff.
- Designated Data Protection Officer.
- Corporate Lead Officer Customer Contact is the Senior Information Risk Owner ('SIRO') and has attended appropriate training for that role.
- The following responsible Officers are identified:
 - IT Security Officer ('ITSO'); and
 - Information and Records Management Officer ('IRMO')
- In addition the following groups/committees consider Information security:
 - Corporate Data Protection Group; and
 - Emergency & Business Continuity Meeting.
- External assessments to include compliance with Code of Conduct.
- Regular Internal Audit of data protection Registration requirements.
- Procedures following Audit Wales audit have been implemented.
- Officers are considering the introduction of privacy notices in relation to applications to all Members, including the Development Management Committee.
- Training provided to Members on their obligations under the GDPR as part of the new Member training and a section on said legislation is now included in the protocol for Members in planning.
- Ceredigion County Council signed Wales Accord on the Sharing of Personal Information ('WASPI') and therefore uses WASPI framework for Information Sharing Agreements.

***The Accord is a common set of principles and standards under which partner organisations will share personal information. Organisations who adopt the Accord will show their commitment in meeting the agreed conditions, obligations and requirements within the framework.
- In most cases agreements are forwarded to the Data Protection Officer.
- There is also a public register on WASPI Website.
- Regular external Assessments e.g. Compliance with Code of Conduct.
- Internal performance monitoring and evidence.

- Cross matching data happens across the different services.
- Performance Indicator values are validated with evidence.
- Retention Schedule –now published on intranet.
- All Councillors signed Personal / Confidential Data Agreement.

Strong public financial management

- The latest version of the Medium Term Financial Strategy ('MTFS') was approved by Full Council on 21/09/23. This reflects the 2023/24 WG Final Settlement and the 2024/25 WG indicative All Wales Settlement and covers the period 2023/24 to 2026/27. This was also considered by Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 19/07/23 and Cabinet on 05/09/23.
- This now includes a policy framework for setting the budgets annually as well as a three-year plan. The MTFS features as a corporate risk that is updated at least three times a year. The annual budget setting also included a risk assessment. The Council is responding to the proposal in the 2016 Wales Audit Office (now Audit Wales) Annual Improvement Report and considering the report in light of the MTFS through ensuring that the Council's financial management arrangements are sufficiently robust to meet the significant challenges ahead.
- A Strategic Plan has been developed and has improved the programme of work necessary to consider service priorities whilst addressing financial constraints.
- An annual budget project plan/timetable is established to ensure that a balanced budget is approved within the statutory period in accordance with the Councils budget framework.
- Regular budget reports are taken to Cabinet and Leadership Group throughout the year and operational budgets are monitored on a monthly basis.
- Budget monitoring is regular throughout the year, within services, to Cabinet and to Member Officer working groups e.g. Development Group and CMG.
- Quarterly Executive Panel meetings take place if required with Corporate Lead Officers together with the Leader of the Council, the CE, Corporate Lead Officer for Finance and Cabinet Member with Finance responsibility.
- Detailed scrutiny of the budgets prior to final decision by Council.
- Overview and Scrutiny Committees have the ability to scrutinise budgets at any time during the year.

G. Implementing Good Practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability:

Implementing good practice in transparency

- Council's Website.
- Council and Cabinet meetings are broadcasted.
- Standard templates for Cabinet, Scrutiny and Council.
- Compliance to the Welsh language Standards and publication of the annual monitoring report.
- Use of Modern.Gov for publishing agendas and Councillor Information.
- Councillors' contact details, attendance records, Committee membership and Declarations of Interests available on the Council's Website.

- Councillors' annual reports available on the Council's Website.
- Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report available on the [Council's Website](#).
- [Democratic Services Annual Report](#) available on the Council's Website.
- Equipment has been installed in the Council Chamber to enable hybrid meetings to be held, as per the Local Government and Elections Act 2021. Members of the public and press can attend in person or remotely where the meeting is not broadcast on the Council's Facebook page. The Council provides alternative ways for citizens to access information if they don't have access to digital services.

Implementing good practices in reporting

- The County Council's Self-assessment and Annual Review of Performance and Well-being Objectives Annual Report is published on the Ceredigion County website to inform Ceredigion citizens what activities and actions the Council undertakes in support of its Well-being and Improvement Objectives. This also forms part of the Council's self-assessment. A summary plan is also available in public offices for our citizens.
- [Annual financial statements](#) are published on the Council's Website.
- Council's [AGS](#) evidences how it complies with the seven core Governance Framework Principles and sub-principles contained in the Framework and in the Local Code of Corporate Governance, including how it puts in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitates the effective exercise of its functions, and makes arrangements for risk management (the Governance Framework was developed in 2010 and has been revised in accordance with the CIFA/SOLACE Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016). In compliance also with Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- Assessment of the framework for corporate governance carried out to ensure compliance. Decision by Council whether [AGS](#) approved alongside Statement of Accounts.
- [AGS](#) shared with accounts, reviewed and updated with Members and Officers providing a wider engagement process.
- Council's [Local Code of Corporate Governance](#) demonstrates how it has the necessary corporate governance arrangements in place to perform effectively. The Local Code of Governance is a public statement that sets out the way the Council will meet that commitment. 2023-24 Local Code of Corporate Governance approved by Council 20.4.2023 and published on Council website.
- Financial implications are a requirement for inclusion in all Cabinet Meeting reports. [Financial Regulations and Financial Procedure Rules \(Document F Constitution\)](#), [Contract Procedure Rules \(Document G Constitution\)](#) are all up to date.
- Accounting practices - Codes of Practice are complied with Prudential Indicators are prepared and reported to Council and monitored throughout the year. Regular budget monitoring takes place throughout the year. IA also reviews controls over income collection and monitoring.

Assurance and effective accountability

- A good working relationship exists with Welsh Government and external regulators, including Audit Wales, Estyn, CIW, Financial Services Authority ('FSA') and Food Standards Agency as key regulators.
- Audit Wales Protocol documented and procedures in place to ensure all 'Management Response Forms' from each Audit Wales report addressed and that Service responses are presented to Leadership Group, Governance and Audit Committee and Audit Wales.
- Regarding monitoring of progress of actions/recommendations, Governance Officer is Audit Wales point of contact for ongoing governance related MRFs/governance matters. Corporate Performance and Improvement Officer is point of contact for performance related MRFs/performance matters. This system is set out in a Protocol, approved by Leadership Group and presented to Governance and Audit Committee, with updated version (to reflect that the Corporate Performance and Improvement Officer is in post) presented to Governance and Audit Committee 9.9.2021 Meeting.
- Monthly meetings are also being held between Performance Officers & Audit Wales and can be arranged with other officers as necessary. Regular dialogue is maintained with representatives from Audit Wales.
- Recommendations from Audit Wales are taken forward in the Corporate Performance Management arrangements.
- All Audit Wales reports presented to Leadership group and Governance and Audit Committee, which monitors implementation of corrective actions required.
- Monitoring of progress of Actions process has been developed.
- Chief Internal Auditor (CMIA) is currently studying to gain an IIA qualification, and has considerable local government experience, and is supported by a team with appropriate knowledge and skills.
- The Audit Manager & Senior Auditor are undergoing an IIA qualification.
- and two auditors are developing ICT auditing skills.
- IA Officers are undergoing audit qualifications to enhance knowledge, skills and competency.
- A re-structure of IA was implemented in May 2019, and another in November 2020 and April 2022. The service has been fully resourced since 1 June 2022.
- A new CMIA has been in place from 1 January 2022, and has considerable experience in IA, and is supported by a knowledgeable & skilled Audit Manager.
- The role of CMIA has free and unfettered access to the Chair of the Governance & Audit Committee and both meet regularly during the year.
- Robust risk-based forward work programme and business planning is in place.
- Regular reporting to Governance & Audit Committee on the activity of IA is undertaken, i.e. quarterly Internal Audit Progress Reports to Governance & Audit Committee for monitoring progress performance and improvement and summary of work and audit opinion on assurance provided annually in Internal Audit Annual Report at year end. Follow-up reviews undertaken to monitor corrective actions are implemented.
- Internal Audit Charter regularly reviewed and approved by Governance & Audit Committee (last version approved by Audit Committee 17/1/23).
- CMIA provides annual objective opinion on assurance placed on Council's risk management, control and governance processes, based on the individual assurances given to Managers after each audit review, & feeds into the AGS.
- The external assessor concluded that Ceredigion County Council's Internal Audit function generally conforms with the PSIAS. With the function currently

conforming to 50 of the best practice areas, partial conformance in six areas and no areas of non-conformance.

- IA's mission is to enhance & protect organisational value by providing risk-based & objective assurance, advice & insight. This is detailed in the internal Audit Charter, which also states IA's right of access (as per the Council's Financial Regulations/Constitution).
- Partnership and Accountability agreements are established in collaborative projects.

4 Opinion on the level of assurance that the governance arrangements can provide

The Corporate Manager - Internal Audit (CMIA) prepares an Annual Internal Audit Report at year-end, which is usually presented to the Governance and Audit Committee at its June meeting. The report sets out the individual and collective outcomes of the audit reviews undertaken during the year and provides the overall audit opinion of assurance based on this audit work. The assurance provided also takes into account progress in implementing improvements, consideration of the risk register and assurances provided in reports issued by external regulators. The scope of audit work and how the need to constantly reprioritise to ensure sufficient work is undertaken for the assurance is detailed in the report.

The Annual Report at year-end contains the results of the internal audit annual self-assessment of the service, based on CIPFA's LG Application Note's template.

The external assessor concluded that Ceredigion County Council's Internal Audit function generally conforms with the PSIAS. With the function currently conforming to 50 of the best practice areas, partial conformance in six areas and no areas of non-conformance.

A Report on the Annual Governance Statement 2022-2023 Progress and Current Year Action Plan was provided to the Governance and Audit Committee on 27 September 2023.

The Quarter 1 Internal Audit Progress Report 1/4/2022-30/6/2022 (presented to the Governance and Audit Committee on 27 September 2022 and subsequent periods expected on 17 January 2023, 9 March 2023 and 21 June 2023) include the actions taken to date to achieve the identified proposed improvements.

The Internal Audit staffing structure has been at full complement during the year 2022-2023.

On 10 March 2022, the CMIA also presented to the Governance and Audit Committee the Internal Audit Strategy and Plan for 2022/23. This is designed to ensure a sufficient area of coverage is undertaken to support the annual opinion on the effectiveness of the systems of governance, risk management and internal control across the Council. The Internal Audit Strategy and Plan for 2022/23

summarised the work areas the Internal Audit Section aimed to concentrate their time on during the year, taking account of the situation due to the pandemic.

The service is provided on a reactive basis, this addresses various risks introduced from changes in the Council's working practices such as the interim hybrid working strategy etc. Internal audit work has been assessed on an on-going basis with regular consideration given to the Council's changing risks, needs and priorities. In addition to this reactive work, assurance for 2022/23 is placed on planned reviews either carried forward or undertaken during the year to assess the annual level of assurance for the Council. In addition, more resources have been dedicated to developing the assurance mapping system to provide additional support to the assurance provided at year-end.

The CMIA concluded in her 2022/23 Annual Report presented to the Governance and Audit Committee on 21/06/2023 that the Council has a satisfactory framework of governance, risk management and internal controls in place to manage the achievement of the organisation's objectives during the year, based on:

- the number, scope and assurances from internal and external sources during the year to 31 March 2022, and
- the acceptance of actions by management (where available).

The Annual Governance Statement will be the subject of review by Audit Wales to ensure that it is consistent with their knowledge and with legislation. In addition, the Internal Audit section undertakes an annual independent review of the Annual Governance Framework and the method of scoring and evidence, as noted in Point 2 above.

The Council's Corporate Lead Officer - Customer Contact acts as the Authority's Senior Information Risk Owner and also has responsibility for Data Protection and ICT Security.

The SIRO Forum traditionally included subject matter experts: E.g. Facilities, Data Protection, IT Security, Head of IT, Legal, HR and some departmental representation. This meets every quarter to discuss information risk and information management issues.

The current key roles and scrutiny of Information Assets are as follows:

- An IT Security Officer ('ITSO') who advises on data security and external advisers and consultants are employed from time to time to test and advise on the Authority's security arrangements;
- An Information and Records Management Officer ('IRMO') advises on legal compliance and ensures that policies and procedures are in place and are being adhered to;
- Corporate Data Protection (known internally as Corporate Data Protection / FOI / EIR Group Meeting) meets quarterly and is chaired by the Head of Service Policy (Deputy HOS ICT&CS); and

- Annual Reports as required to the Council's Governance and Audit Committee.

Additionally:

- ITSO is the Vice-chair of Wales National Public Sector Security Forum (CymruWARP) which meets quarterly.
- IRMO Chairs the Information and Records Management Society Wales/Cymru and arranges events across Wales.
- IRMO is part of the WASPI - Mid and West Wales Quality Assurance Panel.

Following the Governance Framework review, overall governance arrangements are considered to be good on the basis that the majority of scores applied were 9/10.

The introduction of the Local Code for Corporate Governance outlining how the Council is committed to the core principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework provides guidance to all Members and Officers on the governance agenda.

Regular review of the Local Code of Governance will provide a high level of assurance that the governance arrangements are fit for purpose.

5 Issues identified for last year (2022-2023)

The following table records the actions that have been taken during 2022-23 to resolve the issues identified in the Annual Governance Statement for 2021-2022:

Note: Any actions not fully completed by the completion date will be carried forward into the 2023-2024 Action Plan

Issue	Action	Outcome / Progress to Date	Lead Officer	Completion Date
A1.1 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	<p>MO to continue to advise Members further on the need to declare hospitality/gifts.</p> <p>MO to continue to advise Chief Officers further on the need to declare:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> close personal associations with other Officers or Members, Ongoing review on Chief Officers business declarations <p>MO and CLO Democratic Services to continue to review Members holding directorships, trusteeships, or memberships when appointed onto outside bodies, and committees, MO to consider member feedback and added</p>	<p>MO advising Members on need to declare hospitality/gifts is ongoing.</p> <p>MO advises members on need to declare close personal associations with other Officers or Members and will continue to do so.</p> <p>Ongoing review on Chief Officers business declarations is still in progress.</p> <p>Review of Members holding directorships, trusteeships, or memberships is ongoing.</p>	EP/LE	March 2023-complete

Issue	Action	Outcome / Progress to Date	Lead Officer	Completion Date
	<p>value and continue to update Code of Conduct for Officers and Members</p> <p>Update Dispensations forms for Members</p> <p>Appraisals were halted due to Covid-19 Pandemic but have now recommenced (undertaken in May 2021 and continue to be held virtually.)</p> <p>Reviewed Code of Conduct for Officers to be issued once updated & approved.</p> <p>Officers to complete a Mandatory Ethics/Fraud e-training module once completed & approved.</p> <p>Planning/Development Management Committee governance actions/documents established, training</p>	<p>Work regarding member feedback and added value outstanding. Code of Conduct for Officers has been updated.</p> <p>Dispensations form for members has been updated.</p> <p>Appraisals recommenced.</p> <p>Review of Code of Conduct for Officers completed and published April 2023, <u>and Staff News update for CeriNet published to inform Staff of changes.</u></p> <p>Ethics/Fraud E-learning training content completed,- e-learning training module launched November 2023</p>		

Issue	Action	Outcome / Progress to Date	Lead Officer	Completion Date
	to be provided and progress to be reviewed during 2022-2023.	Governance arrangements shall continue to be reviewed in relation to the Planning Service, including as part of the response to the recommendations from the Audit Wales Planning Service Follow-Up Review (received 18.7.2023). Members Task & Finish group appointed by Council 26/10/23		
A1.2 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 Nolan Principles)	Planning/Development Management Committee governance actions/documents established, training to be provided and progress to be reviewed during 2022-2023.	Governance arrangements shall continue to be reviewed in relation to the Planning Service, including as part of the response to the recommendations from the Planning Service Follow-Up Review (received 18.7.2023).Members Task & Finish group appointed by Council 26/10/23	EP/LE/RHP	March 2023-ongoing

Issue	Action	Outcome / Progress to Date	Lead Officer	Completion Date
A1.3 Leading by example and using these standard operating principles or values as a framework for decision making and other actions	Leadership Group to be updated on e-learning with HR reporting to Leadership Group.	<p>Complete</p> <p>Code of Conduct Training provided to all Members following the Local Elections 2022 as part of a comprehensive induction programme for all Members. Refresher training provided on 18.5.2023.</p>	LE	March 2023 – Complete
A1.4 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>Delegated Decisions Register to be published.</p> <p>Continued monitoring of the Mandatory e-learning take up of Whistleblowing module. Currently lower than required.</p> <p>Whistleblowing Policy to be reviewed.</p>	<p>Work on publishing Delegated Decisions Register is still in progress.</p> <p>Continued monitoring of completion of mandatory Whistleblowing e-learning module.</p> <p>Whistleblowing policy has been reviewed, updated,</p>	EP/ HR	March 2023- complete

Issue	Action	Outcome / Progress to Date	Lead Officer	Completion Date
		presented to Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee (recommended to approve) and Cabinet (approved). Updated Policy published on CeriNet 17.4.2023.		
A3.1 Ensuring members and Staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of the law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations	Further training to be provided to all Members regarding their responsibilities in relation to Data Protection Principles and privacy notices. Privacy notices for Councillors being developed and to be provided.	Training has been provided to all Members regarding their responsibilities in relation to Data Protection Principles. Privacy notices for Councillors being developed and to be provided by Data Protection Officer.	EP/LE/AM	March 2023
B1.1 Ensuring an open culture through demonstrating, documenting and communicating the organisation's commitment to openness	Completion of review of the FOI Publication Scheme, which is in progress.	FOI Policy and EIR Policy both to be further updated under current business plan. Review of the FOI	LE/AW/MNH	March 2023

Issue	Action	Outcome / Progress to Date	Lead Officer	Completion Date
		<p>Publication Scheme to be undertaken.</p> <p>Hybrid system in place for Members and the public and press to attend public meetings.</p> <p>Council and Cabinet meetings broadcast live on the Council's Facebook pages.</p>		
<p>B3.1 Establishing a clear policy on the type of issues that the organisation will meaningfully consult with or involve individual citizens, service users and other stakeholders to ensure that service (or other) provision is contributing towards the achievement of intended outcomes</p>	<p>Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, decisions have needed to be made by Gold Command for emergency reasons (under the temporary executive function transfer of power in place until 31.8.2021 and for operational procedures under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 following that date), therefore it has been impossible to consult physically in the community at present for many services, and consequently the scoring has been amended to reflect this.</p>	<p>Gold Command is no longer meeting.</p> <p>A new Engagement and Participation Policy, 'Talking, Listening and Working Together' has been published. Implementation of this policy to be reviewed before action complete.</p>	<p>AW</p>	<p>March 2023</p>

Issue	Action	Outcome / Progress to Date	Lead Officer	Completion Date
	To continue to progress the review of the Community Engagement Policy that will include provisions for how stakeholders are engaged in future.			
D2.3 Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively including shared risks	<p>To continue to take into account legislative changes e.g. Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.</p> <p>To implement legislative changes, such as regarding the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and consider/monitor risks facing each partner when working collaboratively, including shared risks.</p>	<p>Work is ongoing to account for legislative changes.</p> <p>Risks facing each partner when working collaboratively will continue to be considered/monitored.</p>	AW/EP	March 2023
G3.1 Ensuring that recommendations for corrective action made by external audit are acted upon	Monitor progress of actions/recommendations.	Monitoring progress of actions/recommendations is ongoing.	EP/AW	March 2023

6 Agreed action plan for matters to be considered during 2023-2024

Following the implementation and review of the CIPFA/SOLACE Delivering good governance in Local Government Framework (2016) the following issues have been identified for resolution during 2023-2024:

Issue	Action	Outcome	Lead Officer	Completion Date
A1.1 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	<p>MO to continue to advise Members further on the Code of Conduct.</p> <p>MO to continue to advise Chief Officers further on the need to declare:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> close personal associations with other Officers or Members, Ongoing review on Chief Officers business declarations <p>Review Members holding directorships, trusteeships, or memberships. Work regarding member feedback and added value outstanding. Code of Conduct for Officers has been updated.</p> <p>Officers to complete a Mandatory Ethics/Fraud e-training module once completed & approved (e-learning training content completed, to be</p>	<p>Further embedding of behaviour with integrity.</p> <p>e-module completed November 2023</p>	EP/LE	March 2024

Issue	Action	Outcome	Lead Officer	Completion Date
	<p>created into e-learning training module shortly).</p> <p>Planning/Development Management Committee governance actions/documents established, training to be provided and progress to be reviewed during 2022-2023.</p> <p>Governance arrangements shall continue to be reviewed in relation to the Planning Service, including as part of the response to the recommendations from the Audit Wales Planning Service Follow-Up Review (received 18.7.2023).</p>	<p>Task & Finish Group established October 2023</p>		
<p>A1.2 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 Nolan Principles)</p>	<p>Planning/Development Management Committee governance actions/documents established, training to be provided and progress to be reviewed during 2022-2023.</p> <p>Governance arrangements shall continue to be reviewed in relation to the Planning Service, including as part</p>	<p>Further embedment of Standard Operation Principles and values, including their communication.</p> <p>Task & Finish Group established October 2023</p>	<p>EP/LE</p>	<p>March 2024</p>

Issue	Action	Outcome	Lead Officer	Completion Date
	<p>of the response to the recommendations from the Audit Wales Planning Service Follow-Up Review (received 18.7.2023).</p> <p>Audit Wales – setting of well-being objectives examination received June 2023. The recommendations will be responded to.</p>			
<p>A1.4 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>	<p>Delegated decision Decisions Register to be published – in progress.</p> <p>Report on generic whistleblowing activity to be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee.</p>	<p>Further embedment of Standard Operating principles and communication through publication of documents.</p> <p>Delegated decision Decisions Register to be published – in progress. TPO Register prepared and to be published January 2024</p> <p>Chief Officer Register of Personal Business Interests to be updated & published</p>	<p>EP/ HR</p>	<p>March 2024</p>

Issue	Action	Outcome	Lead Officer	Completion Date
A3.1 Ensuring members and Staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of the law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations	Privacy notices for Councillors being developed and to be provided by Data Protection Officer.	Demonstrating strong commitment to rule of law. and adherence to relevant laws and regulations	EP/LE/AM	March 2024
A3.2 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.	CMIA has completed and attained the Institute of Internal Auditors' Certified Internal Auditor qualification. The CMIA to complete the IIA's CMIIA qualification.	Ensuring key post holders are able to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements. CIA qualification completed-2023	EP/AJ	March 2024- complete CMIIA March 2026
B1.1 Ensuring an open culture through demonstrating, documenting and communicating the organisation's commitment to openness	FOI Policy and EIR Policy both to be further updated under current business plan. Review of the FOI Publication Scheme to be undertaken.	Demonstrating commitment to openness.	LE/AW/MNH	March 2024
B3.1 Establishing a clear policy on the type of issues that the organisation will meaningfully consult with or involve individual citizens, service users and other stakeholders to ensure that	A new Engagement and Participation Policy, 'Talking, Listening and Working Together' has been published. Implementation of this policy to be considered before action complete.	Improving Community Engagement.	AW	March 2024

Issue	Action	Outcome	Lead Officer	Completion Date
service (or other) provision is contributing towards the achievement of intended outcomes				
D2.3 Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively including shared risks	<p>To continue to take into account legislative changes e.g. Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.</p> <p>To implement legislative changes, such as regarding the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and consider/monitor risks facing each partner when working collaboratively, including shared risks.</p>	<p>Risk management and compliance with legislation to demonstrate commitment to rule of law.</p> <p>Implementation of legislative changes -complete</p>	AW/EP	March 2024
E2.2 Publishing a statement that specifies the types of decisions that are delegated and those reserved for the collective decision making of the governing body	Delegated Decision Register to be published.	<p>Further clarity on which decisions are delegated through communication by way of publication.</p> <p>TPO Register prepared and to be published January 2024</p>	EP	March 2024

Issue	Action	Outcome	Lead Officer	Completion Date
		Chief Officer Register of Personal Business Interests to be updated & published		
G3.1 Ensuring that recommendations for corrective action made by external audit are acted upon	Monitor progress of actions/recommendations – ongoing action.	Assurances and managing risk. Organisation Response Forms are completed for all External Audit reports and are presented to GAC as a standing item on the agenda.	EP/AW	March 2024

7 Conclusion

The annual governance framework review measured progress against the new CIPFA/SOLACE Delivering Good Governance Framework (2016) and overall governance arrangements were found to be acceptable or good. The review confirmed that the Council's governance arrangements are effective and fit for purpose.

The Council has made good progress during the year with recorded achievements against each of the seven core principles.

The development of a Local Code of Corporate Governance bringing together all the local codes and documents together in one document provides assurance that there are clear governance arrangements in place.

The Council has identified a number of minor issues for resolution during 2023/24 and has set these out in an action plan for completion (as above). The actions taken as a direct result of the pandemic will be recorded, as appropriate.

8 Certification of Annual Governance Statement

We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the above matters to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness throughout the 2023/24 year and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review. It is acknowledged that the pandemic may hinder some of these steps, which will be addressed and reported accordingly to Council in the 2023/24 AGS.