Cyngor Sir
CEREDIGION
County Council

Governance Framework

March 2024
V10.

Introduction

Aims

Our Governance Framework (the 'Framework') comprises the arrangements put in place to ensure that the intended outcomes for all our stakeholders are defined and achieved, whilst ensuring that we always act in the public interest. It also sets out the way the Council meets that commitment in order to achieve the Council's vision and Corporate Well-being Objectives, brings together all governance arrangements and provides assurance that there are clear governance arrangements in place.

This Framework document summarises how the Council:
- Organises its affairs through determining an appropriate governance, executive oversight and organisational structure
- Agrees and implements robust policies, systems and processes
- Makes and executes decisions in an efficient and transparent manner
- Engages with, and holds itself accountable to local people

This Framework is a public statement for our stakeholders which sets out the way we are committed to effectively delivering our Corporate Strategy for the benefit of local people/ citizens of Ceredigion.

The Corporate Strategy sets out the Council's vision and Corporate Wellbeing Objectives.
Our four Corporate Well-being Objectives are:
- Boosting the Economy, Supporting Businesses and Enabling Employment
- Creating Caring and Healthy Communities
- Providing the Best Start in Life and Enabling Learning at All Ages
- Creating Sustainable, Green and Well-connected Communities

Our governance is founded on the basic seven principles of accountability, transparency, effectiveness, integrity, impartiality, and inclusivity together with the overarching concept of leadership.

We do this in 7 ways:
- Act ethically.
- Engage with the public.
- Define what people need.
- Identify actions to meet needs.
- Engage capacity to carry out actions.
- Monitor risks and manage performance.
- Be open & accountable and open.

The Council has adopted the Framework for Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (CIPFA / Solace, 2016). The framework sets out 7 key principles for achieving good governance. The Framework comprises two core principles and five supporting principles. Principles A and B run through principles C to G but good

governance is dynamic, and the Council as a whole is committed to improving governance on a continuing basis through a process of evaluation and review.

The principles are set out below:

A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law
- Act Ethically
- Monitor risks and manage performance.
- Be open and accountable.

B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
- Engage with the community to make sure that the Council understand what the public expects from us and to show how we are trying to achieve this.
- Make sure that we communicate with all sections of the community and encourage active participation in our activities.
- Act as 'ambassadors' to promote the interests of Ceredigion and its residents
- Define what people need

C Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.
- Accountable
- Openness
- Transparency
- Public engagement
- Define what people need and want.

D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.
- Engagement with the public
- Define what people need.
- Identify actions that meet needs.
- Ensure capacity to carry out the actions.

E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.
- Make sure that councillors and staff follow the highest standards of conduct.
- Maintain a fair and effective disciplinary procedure to investigate alleged breaches of the standards of conduct
- Ensure capacity to carry out the actions

F: Managing the risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.
- Identify, control and monitor the risks that we face in the course of our work.
- Maintain systems and procedures to control risks and monitoring their effectiveness to ensure that these are being followed.

G: Implementing good practices in transparency reporting, and audit to deliver

effective accountability.
- Audit reports go to the Governance and Audit Committee which is a public meeting and papers are published on the local authority's website.
- Make a clear distinction between the roles and responsibilities of staff and Councillors.
- Open the work of the Council to proper and effective scrutiny.
- Maintain up to date and transparent decision-making processes.
- Be open when we make decisions about the best ways to deliver local services

<u>Governance Process</u>
This document details how the Council complies with each of these of the principles to demonstrate good governance in the Framework including how key documents such as the Council's Corporate Strategy, Constitution, policies & procedures and codes of conduct align with the Council's Corporate Wellbeing Objectives and principles set out in this Framework.

The Council conducts, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of our governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of managers within the Council who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Head of Internal Audit's annual report, and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

The effectiveness of the governance framework be evaluated through a combination of the results of the regular in-year review and monitoring by officers and committees which include:
- Risk Management, including specific consideration of those risks linked to governance processes;
- Internal Audit, whose work includes auditing governance processes, internal controls and the risks in the Corporate Risk Register, including the management of risks, in accordance with the annual internal audit strategy, and which includes 'follow-up' work to ensure that senior officers address agreed 'Management Actions';
- Work of the Council's Scrutiny and other Committees, including its Governance and Audit and Standards committees;
- Opinions and recommendations of the Council's external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates;
- Regular monitoring of improvement and performance against the Council Strategy and its supporting plans and strategies by members and senior managers;
- Review of relevant documents prepared during the year or relating to the year;
- Review of progress against the Council's Corporate Strategy;
- Reviews of feedback from the Councils' regulators and the related scrutiny committees;
- Discussions and receiving comments from, groups of key officers and members including Leadership Group.
- Review of the Council's Constitution -this is undertaken by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Council's Constitution Working Group consisting

of 7 cross-party members. Minor Changes are made by the Monitoring Officer and all others by Council.

- The Council reviews and reports against its governance arrangements on a regular basis.

The result of the annual governance framework review forms the basis of the Council's Annual Governance Statement (AGS). The AGS is presented for approval by the Governance and Audit Committee and Council and published as part of the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts. The purpose of the AGS is to report publicly on the extent to which the Council complies with this framework.

Structures & Responsibilities for Corporate Governance

All Members, Officers and Governance and Audit Committee have a responsibility for upholding the principles of good governance and ethics It is a key responsibility for the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.

Members

The Council consists of 38 Members (councillors). All Councillors are members of the Council, and they may also be members of one or more of the Council's Members bodies (such as the Cabinet or a committee).. Members work together to make decisions which affect everybody who lives, works or visits Ceredigion. They have overall responsibility for the work the Council does - for its policies and how well it performs. They are the voice of the community and play a vital role making democracy work. Every Member has some responsibility for governance.

Members must:

- Understand their communities
- Provide a strategic vision
- Hold senior officers to account
- Not stray into operational management

In addition, lay members/persons sit on the Governance & Audit, Ethics & Standards and Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee, who provide independence.

Relationships between Members and Officers including the Leadership Group must be based on mutual respect.

Officers

The elected members of the Council are supported by paid Officers, who are accountable to the Council and responsible for delivering services to the public in accordance with the policies and procedures agreed by the Council, the Cabinet and their committees and bodies.

The Chief Executive has overall corporate and operational responsibility for the work of the Council and for all paid officers of the Council.

Officers:

- Provide operational management and service delivery,
- Technical and professional expertise
- Impartial advice and information to member
- Be politically impartial,

The organisational hierarchy and structure are set out at Appendix 1, led by the Chief Executive. This sets out the Council's employee line of accountability.

Leadership Group
The Leadership Group, comprising of the Chief Executive, Corporate Directors and Corporate Lead Officers are responsible for the development, delivery and review of robust corporate governance arrangements.

Constitution
The Council's Constitution is the key governance document which sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made, by whom, the democratic structure and the procedures which are followed. This ensures that the Council operates in an efficient, transparent and accountable way to local people and relevant stakeholders. Some of these processes are required by the law, while others are a matter of local choice.

The Constitution enables: -
- the Council to make decisions efficiently and effectively;
- the public to participate in decisions that affect them;
- Councillors to represent their constituents more effectively;
- the public to hold the Council to account;

The Constitution sets out the Chief Officer function delegated powers.

The Monitoring Officer advises on compliance with policies, procedures, laws and regulations whilst the Section 151 officer advises on all financial matters, ensures proper financial records are kept and that a sound system of internal control is in place.

Decision-making
Key policies, and any amendments to them, are approved by Cabinet (the Executive) and where appropriate, formally adopted by Council.
Appendix 2 shows Ceredigion County Council's Democratic and decision-making structure. This shows the relationship between Council, Cabinet and the various Committees including Regulatory Governance & Scrutiny.

The terms of reference and the roles and responsibilities for each committee are outlined in the Constitution.

In situations whereby urgent decisions are needed in a national emergency, and in absence of the Leader/Deputy Leader, Cabinet functions may be further delegated.

Corporate Strategy
The current Corporate Strategy (2022-2027) and sets out the Council's vision and Corporate Wellbeing Objectives. This places an emphasis on the requirement of effective governance structures to support the achievement of the wellbeing objectives.
Our four Corporate Well-being Objectives (2022-2027) are:

- Boosting the Economy, Supporting Businesses and Enabling Employment

- Creating Caring and Healthy Communities
- Providing the Best Start in Life and Enabling Learning at All Ages
- Creating Sustainable, Green and Well-connected Communities

The Council aims to achieve good standards of governance by adhering to the seven core principles and also adhering to the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 principles.

Risk Strategy & Framework
Our Risk Management Policy and Strategy is important to ensure that appropriate procedures are in place and risk appetites and priorities are in place. Risk Management is integral to the operational business planning Policy and Strategy setting.

Corporate Risk Management arrangements are reviewed regularly, and management of risks is included in individual Services Business plans. All Risks are allocated to a Corporate Lead Officer (Risk Owner). Service risks are also considered at CLO level and escalated to LG as appropriate.

The Council has a Corporate Risk Register which is considered quarterly at Leadership Group meetings and by the Governance and Audit Committee as a standing item. The Leadership Group consider the Corporate Risk Register in all decisions.

The Governance and Audit Committee refers risk matters to Scrutiny Committees, where appropriate. This provides ongoing information and assurance that risks continue to be managed.

'Risks' also form the basis of Internal Audit's audit programme of work and Cabinet reports include risks and implications arising.

How do we demonstrate compliance to the Governance Framework?
To comply with the Framework, the Council publishes an Annual Governance Statement, which explains the processes and procedures in place to enable the Council to carry out its functions effectively. In preparing the Annual Governance Statement, the Council conducts an Annual Governance Framework Review to illustrate examples of how the Council complies with the core (and supporting) principles to ensure that:

- Its business is conducted in accordance with all relevant laws & regulations;
- Public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for;
- There is sound and inclusive decision making;
- Resources are used economically, efficiently and effectively; and
- There is clear accountability for the use of those resources to achieve agreed priorities which benefit local people and communities.

This document has therefore been developed in line with the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework and CIPFA/SOLACE *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework*

Guidance notes for Welsh authorities (2016 Edition).
Whilst our governance arrangements reflect the core principles and sub-principles contained in the CIPFA Guidance, we recognise that the principles contained within it are examples of good practice and that the Council is managed more effectively as a result.

. To facilitate good governance, we also have a;
- Governance and Audit Committee
- Ethics & Standards Committee
- Scrutiny Committees
- Governance Framework Review
- Whistleblowing Policy.
- Leadership Group
- Governance Officer

Monitoring and Review of Corporate Governance

The Governance and Audit Committee is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the governance arrangements as described in this Framework.

The Leader and Chief Executive review corporate governance arrangements within the Annual Governance Statement on an annual basis to measure the extent to which the Council meets the requirements of the core principles and sub-principles contained in the CIPFA Framework.

Through the Governance and Audit Committee, the Council will ensure that these arrangements are kept under continual review. This will include consideration of:
- The work of Internal and External Audit
- The opinion of other review agencies and inspectorates
- Opinions from the Council's Statutory Officers
- Implementation of the Governance Framework
- The production of the Annual Governance Statement and actions planned to address arising governance issues

Assurance and effective accountability

The Council has good working relationships and effective communication channels with external regulators.
We have a process to ensure that recommendations from each external regulator report are addressed by way of Organisational Response Forms. Service responses are presented to Leadership Group, and Governance and Audit Committee to ensure monitoring of progress of actions/recommendations.

Corporate Performance Management arrangements are in place to ensure adequate internal monitoring of service delivery.

The Chief Internal Auditor provides an annual objective opinion on the Council's risk management, internal control and governance processes and has free and unfettered access to the Chief Executive & Chair of the Governance & Audit Committee. The Governance and Audit Committee are regularly updated on Internal Audit progress.

Conclusion

We believe this Framework comprises necessary governance arrangements to support the achievement of the Council's vision and Corporate Well-being Objectives and provides assurance that the Council has effective processes in place.

Appendix 1

Organisational Chart

CHIEF EXECUTIVE												

CORPORATE DIRECTOR

- To ensure the development, implementation and evaluation of corporate strategic priorities and objectives which deliver high quality, safe, efficient and effective services to the residents of Ceredigion.
- To work strategically and creatively to achieve the highest possible standards of performance in Council services

CORPORATE DIRECTOR

- To be Corporate Director and provide strategic leadership within the Council ensuring that all services comply with, and support, the Council's strategic objectives and standards.
- To deputise for the Chief Executive when required
- To provide leadership, guidance and performance management of up to six Corporate Lead Officers

CORPORATE LEAD OFFICERS (7)

- To be Corporate Lead Officer and lead advisor to the Council for all matters relating to their specific functions as listed below.
- To provide a key link with Corporate Directors and work with other Corporate Lead Officers in ensuring that strategic and corporate objectives are effectively co-ordinated and implemented across all service areas

CORPORATE LEAD OFFICERS (6)

- Whilst Corporate Lead Officers have specific responsibility for the management and leadership of a portfolio of service areas, they have an overriding corporate responsibility to ensure that all service activities and actions comply with and support Council strategic objectives and standards.
- To work creatively and strategically to achieve the highest possible standards of performance in Ceredigion County Council services

SCHOOLS AND LIFELONG LEARNING		LEGAL & GOVERNANCE	FINANCE & PROCUREMENT	POLICY, PERFORMANCE & PUBLIC PROTECTION	ECONOMY & REGENERATION	HIGHWAYS & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES	PORTH CYNNAL - SPECIALIST THROUGH AGE SERVICES	PORTH GOFAL TARGETED INTERVENTION	PORTH CYMORTH CYNNAR	PEOPLE & ORGANISATION	CUSTOMER CONTACT, ICT & DIGITAL	DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
LIFELONG LEARNING	SCHOOLS											
*Chief Education Officer	Deputy Chief Education Officer	*Monitoring Officer	*Chief Finance Officer (s151 Officer)				*Statutory Director of Social Services	Deputy Director of Social Services			*SIRO *Proper Officer for Civil Registration	*Head of Democratic Services
• Post-16 education • Attendance, inclusions & behaviour support • Pupil welfare • Pupil Referral Units • EOTAS • Lifelong Learning, Skills & Employment • Cultural Services • Catering • Pre-school provision • Childcare offer Welsh Language Standards	• School Improvement • Attainment • Additional Learning Needs • Admissions and appeals. • Governors Sustainable Schools Programme	• Legal • Corporate Governance • Internal Audit Coroners Service	• Procurement, Commissioning and Payments • Core Finance (Deputy 151) • Service Finance (Deputy 151) Revenues & Financial Assessment	• Strategic Partnerships, Engagement & Equalities • Complaints, Compliments & FOI • Public Protection • Corporate Performance & Research • Refugee resettlement Civil contingencies & Business continuity	• Growth and Enterprise • Planning Property	• Highways Maintenance • Highways Development • Local Environment Services • Transport Services	Specialist through age services including: • Strategic Safeguarding • Quality Assurance and Independent Review • Mental wellbeing and substance misuse • Planned care. Extended support	• Intake & Triage Team • Targeted intervention services • Fostering Services • Residential and Day Care services (*Responsible Individual) • Integrated community equipment stores. • Emergency Duty Team	• Wellbeing Centres • Support & Prevention • Early Intervention Housing Services	• HR Advice & Admin • Pay, Benefits & Systems • Learning & Development • Health & Safety Employee engagement & wellbeing	• ICT • Customer Contact • Archives & Info Management • Library Services Civil Registration	• Democratic Services • Translation • External Communication • Electoral Services • Corporate Service Support • Project Management

Appendix 2
Democratic and decision-making structure

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                        ┌──────────────────────┐
                        │     THE PUBLIC       │
                        └──────────────────────┘
                     ┌────────────────────────────┐
                     │        COUNCILLORS         │
                     └────────────────────────────┘
                    ┌──────────────────────────────┐
                    │           COUNCIL            │
                    └──────────────────────────────┘
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CABINET (executive)	REGULATORY	GOVERNANCE	SCRUTINY	OTHER	JOINT
LEADER DEPUTY LEADER CABINET	DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ETHICS AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE LICENSING COMMITTEE (ALSO NON-STATUTORY COMMITTEE – TAXIS AND OTHER MATTERS)	GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE LEARNING COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE THRIVING COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	CHARITY TRUSTEE COMMITTEE CONFERENCE ON THE APPROVED SYLLABUS LANGUAGE COMMITTEE STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIONS EDUCATION IN CEREDIGION (SACRE)	MID WALES CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEE