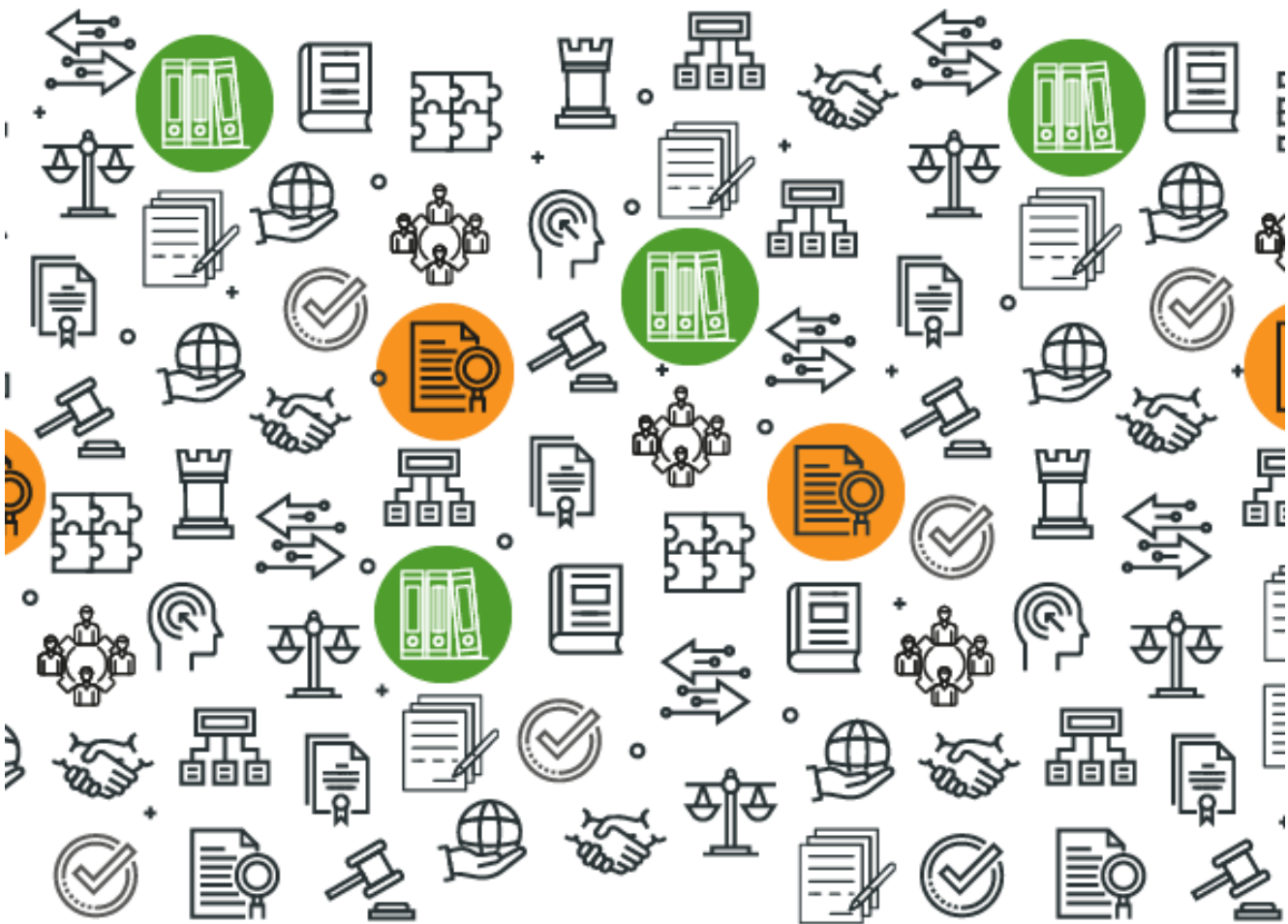


Final Draft Annual Governance Statement 2020-21



1. The Annual Governance Statement 2020/21

The council is required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to prepare and publish an annual governance statement. This statement has been informed by an annual review of the effectiveness of the council's governance framework and systems of internal control as set out in the [code of corporate governance](#). This statement demonstrates the degree of compliance and planned improvements in the coming year.

1.1 Review of the year

The impact of Covid 19 has had a major effect globally and locally – with the council having to adjust its services and introduce new functions to meet the requirements of the Herefordshire community. Public Health has been at the forefront, often having to plan, make decisions and deliver simultaneously in a rapidly changing environment responding to evolving understanding of the virus. The pandemic has shone a light of inequalities whether that be in health, well-being, social networks, finance or digital exclusions.

The council instigated a mass redeployment programme to address the immediate needs of people within the community. This was completely needed at the time but had a significant effect on delivery programmes and performance throughout the rest of the year. Staff were required to work from home, for which most people adapted well and the technology was available to support this approach – helped by the fact that the council had already prepared and instigated flexible working. Communication was virtual, including council meetings via conference calls. Employee surveys show some of the benefits including sickness levels reduced and supported savings plans with the council reducing the number of office locations. Social care response teams for adults and children were impacted on missing mutual support / shared advice and were subsequently located in the office.

The final signing off of the 2019/20 AGS was delayed due to the external auditors continued work on their value for money opinion, and who in turn required information and assurance from the council. Their value for money opinion was qualified in relation to the capital programme and children's services.

Mr Justice Keehan, a High Court Judge, outlined his finding from the hearing of a court case that identified significant failings by Herefordshire Council relating to a family with children in the council's care which were published on 16 April 2021 with an extraordinary full council meeting taking place on 27 April 2021 to discuss the findings. The council requested the Department for Education conduct an urgent review of the children's social care services to assess whether children in care are safe finding no immediate actions were required on the cases they reviewed but further external reviews will be required to make sure services are fit for purpose. This will form the basis of significant focus for 2021/22 work programme and to understand failings in the council's assurance processes along with an Improvement Plan including cultural change within the service.

During the year the Chief Executive left the organisation and a new appointment made – starting in May 2021. The Director of Public Health also left the council and promoted an existing consultant to fulfil the role on an interim basis which was so crucial during the pandemic.

The council has also included a major savings programme during the year with the target of achieving £11.5m saving in 2021/22. A capital programme of £ was approved by council in February 2021.

Despite these challenges the council has continued to operate for the benefit of local residents and businesses.



2. Corporate Governance and the Annual Statement

Corporate governance generally refers to the processes by which an organisation is directed, controlled and held to account. Governance will determine who has authority to make the decisions to achieve the intended outcomes whilst acting in the public interest at all times. It is how the council ensures it provides the right services, to the right people in a timely, open, and accountable way. Good corporate governance encourages better informed longer-term decision making using resources efficiently, and being open to scrutiny with a view to improving performance and managing risk.

Effective governance leads to:

- ✓ Making the right decisions for the right reasons through leadership and management.
- ✓ Continuous improvement through understanding and managing risk and performance.
- ✓ Safeguarding public funds, ensuring spend is made in the right time and the right way.
- ✓ Public engagement and the right outcomes for residents and businesses of the county.

This annual statement incorporates:

- **Scope of responsibility and governance framework:** acknowledges responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of governance, summarises the key elements of the governance framework and the roles of those responsible for the development and maintenance of the governance environment;
- **The statement:** describes how the council has monitored and evaluated the effectiveness of its governance arrangements in the year, and outlines how the council has responded to any issue(s) identified in last year's governance statement; and
- **Improving governance:** reports on any key governance matters identified from this review and provides a commitment to addressing them.

It should be noted that any system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk or failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance.

3. Scope of responsibility and governance framework

Herefordshire 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 whilst used economically, efficiently and effectively. The council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to continually review and improve the way it works. Key is the [constitution](#) as a published document that details how the council makes its decisions, who has responsibility and the procedures it follows.

The council has adopted a code of corporate governance that is consistent with the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy ("CIPFA")/Society of Local Authority Chief Executives ("SOLACE") framework for delivering good governance in local government (2016).

The governance framework comprises of the systems, processes, culture and values by which the council is controlled, and sets out how the council accounts to, engages with and takes a leadership role in community. The framework enables the council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate and cost-effective services.

The framework operates at three levels, often referred to as the "three lines of defence" based on three opportunities to address risk and weaknesses in governance:

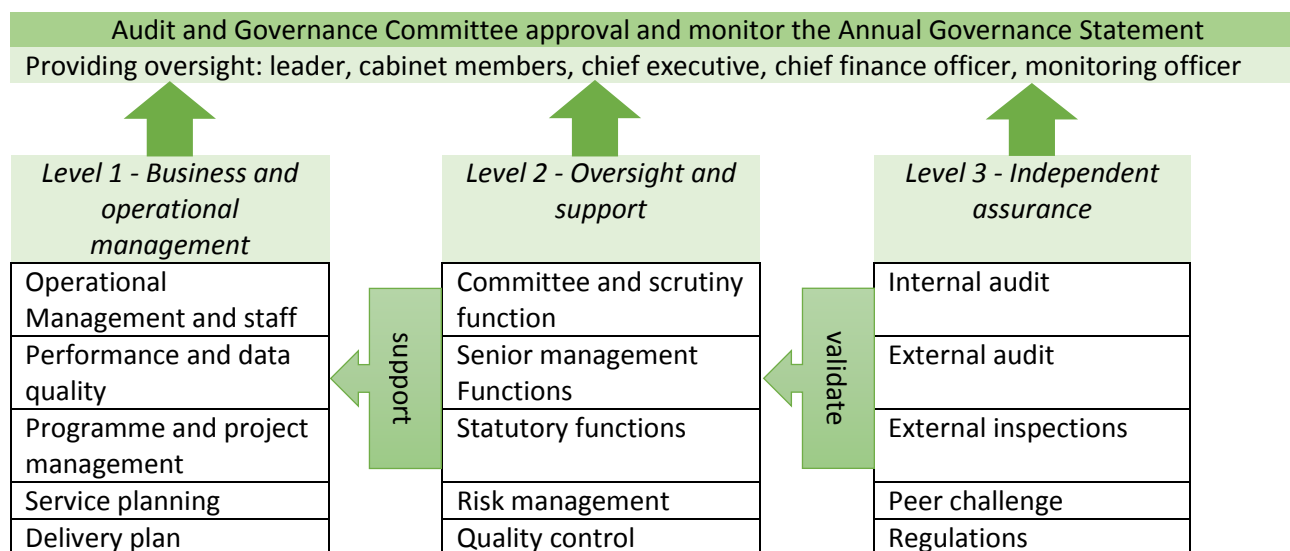
Level 1 - Business and operational management. Operational management and staff delivering objectives, identifying risks and improvement actions, implementing controls, reporting progress, providing management assurance, and ensuring compliance. This level is supported by:



Level 2 - Oversight and support. Portfolio holders, scrutiny and audit and governance committee, senior managers and statutory officers provide strategic, policy and direction setting, decision-making, and assurance oversight. This level is validated by....

Level 3 - Independent assurance. Internal and external audit, inspection and review agencies, and regulators provide independent challenge and audit, reporting assurance, and audit opinion in relation to assurance levels.

How these levels interact and operate across the organisation is described above but also is illustrated below showing the 3 levels of defence:



4. Preparing the Statement

The AGS is presented jointly by the Chief Finance Officer who is the council's section 151 officer (a statutory role responsible for the proper administration of the council's financial affairs), and the Solicitor to the Council who is the council's monitoring officer (a statutory role responsible for maintaining the constitution, ensuring decision-making is fair and lawful, and for dealing with complaints that councillors have breached the councillor code of conduct).

In preparing the AGS the council has:

- Reviewed existing governance arrangements against the guidance included in CIPFA/SOLACE 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' framework – 2016 and the new governance risk and resilience framework from the centre for governance and scrutiny ("CFGs").
- Reviewed the code of corporate governance to ensure it reflects this guidance and includes the recommended seven principles of good governance
- Assessed the effectiveness of our governance arrangements against the code of corporate governance.

The key sources of assurance that inform this review are as below:

- Review compliance with laws and regulations, corporate strategies, policies, plans and arrangements e.g. constitution, financial and performance monitoring and reporting, and risk management
- Statutory officers' declarations
- Significant partnerships' governance risk assessments
- Internal audit reports and opinions
- Findings from Audit & Governance Committee and scrutiny committees
- External bodies and inspectorates reports
- Views of the council's appointed Independent Person(s) on the draft review.



The Statement sets these sources of information against the 7 Principles of Corporate Governance (A to G) as set out in the Herefordshire Council's [Code of Corporate Governance](#).

5. The Statement

The following information is a summary of actions and behaviours taken by the council in relation to each of the core principles (based on "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government" framework – 2016").

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

- Working group of councillors established to consider governance models based on "Rethinking Governance" programme including looking at areas for greater transparency, participation in decision making and involvement. Recommendations from Audit and Governance Committee of [25 September 2020](#) were agreed by Full Council on 9 October 2020 based on a hybrid cabinet model implemented from May 2021. This has been delayed but is making progress for adoption at full council in October 2021.
- Independent persons were asked to review how standards hearings could be reviewed – this was completed on 8 February 2021 and additional views have been sought from parish councils and HALC. Where improvements could be made with input from independent persons with revised arrangements raised with Audit and Governance Committee in March 2021 along with models of code of conduct. Dealing with code of conduct complaints has had significant delays during the pandemic and has resulted in outsourcing of work. A plan to get complaints back under control and timeliness of decisions is underway.
- An annual report on Anti-Fraud and Corruption was presented to Audit and Governance Committee on [26 January 2021](#) including consultation on the updated strategy. A new counter fraud specialist recruited for prevention and detection work.
- The council's new [Equality Policy 2020-23](#) was agreed on [13 October 2020](#) by Cabinet member finance and corporate services in consultation with cabinet and the council also produced the [Equality in Employment](#) document profiling the workforce of officer and members including the gender pay gap.
- Between 2018 and 2021 a series of critical external events occurred that raised justifiable questions as to the effectiveness of Herefordshire's Children's Services, culminating in the latest critical judgement in early April 2021 from His Hon Justice Keenan. This has led to the creation of Children's Services Improvement Board, independently chaired by a DfE advisor, who has been appointed by the Minister for Children and Families, in line with a 12- month non-statutory notice to improve
- The [constitution](#) is a published document providing a comprehensive account of how the council operates. Elements of the constitution are reviewed through the decision making process including in 2020/21 update of the Financial and Contractual Procedure Rules agreed by audit committee on [26 January 2021](#). This included changed to the rules to support the council's ambitions on social value to use our purchasing power to aid local economic growth and support the outcome of the delivery plan.
- During the Covid-19 pandemic the council has needed to make rapid decisions to address the emergency (with decisions published on the [council website](#)) using the powers outlined in section 3.7.9 of the constitution.
- The Annual Code of Conduct report was presented to audit and governance committee on [25 September 2020](#), and code of conduct training was made mandatory for all staff during the year.
- The council has processes in place to make a [complaint](#), and to ensure complaints are investigated appropriately. Between April 2020 and March 2021 the council dealt internally with 737 complaints, of which the council upheld or partially upheld 14%. The figures need to be seen in the context of a lower volume of complaints received at the start of the covid-19 pandemic, and some large spikes in volumes for specific campaigns on the same topic were received. In addition, 10 complaints were processed under the children's complaints procedure for children's social care.
- Of the 40 complaints received by the LGSCO from Herefordshire residents 34 were closed at the initial enquiry stage. Of the 6 complaints that qualified for further investigation 3 were upheld; 1 was in Highways and Transportation (required an apology), 1 in Planning (required an apology and training); 1 in Children and Families (requiring financial redress and policy change).



- During the year the council procured a new complaints CRM to be more efficient in processes. A review of both the Complaints Policy and Unreasonable Behaviour Policy started in 2020/21 to be completed during 2021.
- The monitoring officer has led a piece of work with Cabinet and Management Board to consider working with officers on an action plan to be implemented in 2021.
- New [guidance](#) has been released by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny on the Governance Risk and Resilience Framework which builds on the work of CIPFA/SOLACE from 2016 which can guide a refresh of the council's annual governance statement.
- The whistleblowing policy
- A whole website page on policies was developed and available to view

Summary and continuous improvement

- Deliver the objectives and recommendations of the Children's Services Improvement Board; and make significant change to the culture and practice in children's social care supported by the wider organisation
- Implement Rethinking Governance recommended changes to the constitution and oversee operational procedures
- New CRM system for complaints and review the Unreasonable Behaviour and Complaints policies
- Introduce anti-fraud training for all staff
- A revised code of conduct for members and new arrangements for dealing with allegations that members have breached the code
- Review annual governance statement based on new guidelines and lessons learnt
- Run member and officer working together training sessions.

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

- A great deal of community communication and engagement was needed during the year based on Covid 19. There was deep engagement with areas affected by the outbreak – most notable Rook Farm where workers needed to stay on site to stop the spread of the infection. This also received considerable media interest.
- The council published [weekly information](#) regarding Covid-19 to enable a comprehensive and informed view – this information is linked on the [Understanding Herefordshire](#) website of published data gathered on the county.
- The council conducted consultation on the 2021/22 budget in autumn 2020 beyond the statement requirement. This involved virtual face to face with 17 stakeholder groups. 265 people responded to the on-line consultation and 33 organisations. Staff were also asked their views on the budget which supported decision making on Council's adoption of the budget on 12 February 2021.
- The council has adopted a [partnerships' governance framework](#) which is due to be reviewed by 2022. The process for registering partnerships was refined to be on-line however an internal audit of January 2021 found there needs to be improvements to the system – this includes making it easier for officers to complete the registration form but more accountable including forms presented to Audit and Governance Committee and attendance on request to explain the partnership.
- Hereford Towns Board was established as part of the governments stronger town funding scheme to prepare a bid for funding to improve Hereford City Centre. Whilst the council is the accountable body, the requirement of the board where mandated as Government requirement to access the funding.
- The Leader of the Council produces a newsletter for all council members with information provided by cabinet members. From 1 April 2021 it will be shared with parish councils. This supports the wider working with parish councils including quarterly parish summits.
- The appointment and training programme for any co-optees to the council was reviewed during the year. The protocol outlines the expectation that independent or co-opted persons serving on Council Committees are expected to comply with the Councillors' Code of Conduct. The protocol will be applied to the recruitment of co-optees for the new municipal year in-take of co-optees. Following annual Council in May 2021 co-optee



appointments will be invited and candidate suitability will be assessed and confirmed against the co-optee protocol criteria.

- The council continues to drive for transparency and openness through the publication on its website of reports, data and information – Understanding Herefordshire
-

Continuous improvement

- Partnership governance framework to be reviewed
- New Communication and Engagement Strategy
- Deliver on arrangements for co-optee appointments.

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

- Whilst the council had in place the [County Plan](#) during 2020/21 the Delivery Plan was produced and agreed.
- The response to Covid-19 was defined as an emergency (including using emergency powers). However during the year activity was embedded in work programmes including outbreak management, test and trace and community welfare, including support for the most vulnerable through the BRAVE programme of work. 2021/22 will see a focus on recovery.
- On 23 [July 2020](#) cabinet agreed a revised BWOW plan (better ways of working). The plans needed to change from the previously agreed approach because of the impacts on Covid and learning the value from working from home because moving forward with a hybrid model mixing home and office working. This has created a budget saving as well as a positive environmental impact with less site energy use, reduction of print and post in favour of digital communication, and less travel. This needs to be considered in the bigger context the different venues and the Estates Strategy is due for renewal.
- Talk community is the brand name for a way of working in the council that focuses on individual and community enablement. The programme provides the support and backing for communities to organise local gateways for people to access information and services. The Talk Community strategic approach and governance was agreed by cabinet on [24 September 2020](#), though one pillar on Talk Community Hubs was impacted by Covid during the year.
- New requirement for “Writing and Publishing Council Plans, Policies and Procedures” agreed by cabinet member on [21 September 2020](#), creates a standard and format for documents whilst recognising flexibility for different types of documents. Improvement made to registering policies, but work remaining to create an effective pipeline of documents linked to upgrade of modern.gov or other digital system.
- During the year the council updated its Risk and Opportunity Management Framework agreed on [24 September 2020](#). This outlines the process for management of performance information which will see its full implementation in 2021/22.

Continuous improvement

- To instigate a pipeline of policies and strategies linked to governance decision making
- Embedded new structure in public health to address the continued responses to Covid 19 whilst addressing other public health priorities
- Produce a Covid Recovery Plan
- Produce the Estates Strategy for the use of council buildings.



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

- The cabinet agreed its [Delivery Plan](#) on 26 November 2020 to outline implementation of the [County Plan](#). The delivery plan includes outcome and targets, which will form the basis of the quarterly performance reports presented to cabinet and published as part of decision reports.
- As part of the continuous improvement and focus on outcomes the council has established Member Oversight and Improvement sessions – these include core management board, cabinet members and support members, group leaders and chairpersons of scrutiny committees. The first session was held on 29th January 2021 based on the theme of the economy.
- The council also established a Programme Management Office (PMO) to strengthen management of the capital programme. This service to host project managers to support projects to keep on track and to spend profile. This includes the implementation of a board structure with assurance at its heart.
- Following Storm Dennis there was significant damage to the highway network with a number of governance decision required to identify the programme of works and allocate funding through cabinet and council. The reopening of the Fownhope Road (B4224) in March 2021 took longer than anticipated having significant impact of the local community. On [22 March 2021](#) General Scrutiny Committee reviewed how Fownhope Flood repair works were delivered and any lessons learnt in the future. The highways services is also undertaken its own lessons learnt as part of continuous improvement and independent review commissioned by legal services.
- Both internal and external audit to review how value for money is ensured in the delivery of the public realm contract had been completed in year. Internal audit assess this on specific audits as necessary and external audit carry out an annual review. An action plan has been developed following the consideration of the BBLP contract with an improvement plan being overseen by an improvement board.
- [Children and Young People's Plan 2019-2024](#) delivery is overseen by Children and Young People (CYP) Partnership Board, reviewing regular updates on delivery of plan. Delivery of Safeguarding and Family Support Improvement Plan overseen via Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee who received a report on first quarter performance for 2020/21. However, consideration need to be given to the role and relationship with scrutiny committee based on the revelation of the recent court cases. A review of the partnership working is also required.
- At the Children and Young People Scrutiny committee on 2 June 2020 members considered a report on Children and Young People Scrutiny committee further review to the council's spotlight review into peer on peer abuse in schools. This further work was bought back to committee on 15 [September 2020](#). There remains outstanding work in this area.
- A great deal of progress had been made on advancing the council's ambitions on creating social value through its procurement process. The financial and contractual procedure rules were agreed at audit and governance on [26 January 2021](#) to create reasonable flexibility to support local contracting and easier routes to market. In addition the cabinet member for [15 December 2020](#) agreed the council's approach to social value, which was developed in consultation with services and external business. The updated rules also included revised process for waiver from the contractual procured rules to have the decision making on the senior responsible owner taking advice from commercial, finance and legal teams.
- The commercial team have also updated on contracts Tool Kit so commissioners are fully aware of the contracting requirements and can use the information provided to guide them through the process. The council has a [Procurement and Commissioning Strategy](#) that is due to be refreshed in 2021/22 financial year.

Continuous Improvement

- Update the Procurement and Commissioning Strategy
- Implement improvement plan for value for money on the public realm contract
- Deliver on recommendation of Peer on Peer spotlight review
- Implement programme management board decision and assurance framework.



Principle E: Developing the organisation's capacity including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

- Member development [strategy](#) was adopted during the year and a training programme is in development with the working group and will also take on board the member development consideration of the Re-thinking Governance Group. Following approval from full council in May 2021 new mandatory training will be introduced in year 3 of the term of office.
- The council has needed to take a significant leadership role in 2020/21 linked to the Covid response. Many responsibilities and tasks were devolved from national to local government as closest to the community being affected. The council was required to deliver local testing, tracing (featured on national TV), emergency food delivery, outbreak management / containment and surge testing. Whilst the health sector leads on vaccine the council was required to provide information on cohorts and support of venue management.
- During the pandemic the council appointed a new acting director of public health and a new Chief Executive. In the interim period statutory roles were covered by existing staff.
- A new Workforce and Organisational Development Strategy was agreed on [12 January 2020](#) by the cabinet member, again refocused to reflect the change in practice influenced by Covid 19.
- Mandatory training for all officers was introduced this year for code of conduct along with the other areas of required training including information governance, information security and equality. The council achieved over 97%. Though, as mandatory all staff should complete the training.
- The management training programme including our 'future leaders' programme continued in a limited form due to the pandemic with all training moved to online platforms.
- IT training of using conference calling and virtual digital working was introduced in February 2020 with a new system and this will continue with a programme of IT training to address more reliance of on-line working.
- Advice and guidance was given to staff and members of phishing email, and review of SPAM messages presented to the cabinet member.
- A review was undertaken of cabinet portfolio briefings to ensure they are fit for purpose for implementation in 2021/22
- Established for Children and Families service was a quarterly meetings for the director, leader, cabinet member for Children Services and chief executive to provide oversight.

Continuous improvement

- Implement the Member Development training plan
- Additional training and development for Children and Young People Scrutiny
- Promotion of becoming a council member reflective of flexibility with increased virtual meetings
- Revised training and guidance for officers on decision making
- Implement Re-Thinking Governance recommendations
- Wider IT training for staff
- Implement changes to portfolio briefing and review effectiveness
- Revised recruitment policy; publication of the ex-offenders policy; review market forces guidance to ensure fit for purpose.

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

- A new risk requirement was introduced as part of the updated Performance, Risk and Opportunity Management Framework on [24 September](#) 2020. However, work still needs to take place to embed within the culture of the organisation.
- Herefordshire Council has a robust financial management system in place. It is understood where an overspend has occurred and for what reason. Additional controls have been put in place this year on capital management including regular reporting by the project officer / senior responsible officers.
- As outlined previously financial procedure rules were updated in January 2020, this includes the process for grant applications. Each application of over £10k needs agreement by the 151 Officer and if deemed a



requirement needs agreement from core management board. Notification given to the Grants and Programme team to retain a register.

- Employees with budget responsibilities needed to complete an on-line awareness module regarding finance and register that it was completed.
- The [Contract's Register](#) is published on the council's website to be integrated to the council's internal finance system. The contract tool kit was updated along with a new approach to registering contracts due for renewal through a "pipeline".
- Three reports were made to the Information Commissioners Office due to breach posing a risk to the rights and freedoms of an individual or individuals. This did not result in any penalty for the council. All breaches are investigated and recommendations to mitigate against risks are made by the Information Governance Team. Training is provided to teams or more significant action depending on the incident, along with mandatory training.
- The council has an Information Governance Steering Group who has revised a number of policies this year including Information Security Policy where a number of policies were configured into one document for clarity. IT report figures to this group each year relating to data security and work has taken place to ensure staff and members are aware of phishing emails.
- Local government ombudsman complaints were not progressed during the pandemic but have resumed, a review will be undertaken on the policy and how the decisions are reported to cabinet.

Continuous improvement

- Embed a risk management culture and practice in the organisation
- External funding strategy produced
- Updated continuity planning in light of Covid-19 and lessons learnt from flooding emergencies
- Oversight of external grants and grants register created.

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

- With the adoption of the Delivery Plan there is a sound mechanism to report progress on key outcomes and programmes. This will see a change in look and feel of quarterly reports. The council plans to invest in a programme to improve its reporting tools and will enable greater access at a glance to key performance indicators for members, staff and the general public.
- A new engagement programme with members (cabinet, scrutiny chairs and group leaders) was introduced this year called "Improvement and Development Sessions" – these have a combined role of challenging the directorates on their delivery along with collaborating on solutions.
- Each cabinet member has a portfolio briefing which provides reporting on performance, risk, reports and key schemes based on "no surprises". These work well from feedback but not consistently applied.
- SWAP provide the council with internal audits (their opinion included in this document). Their plan for audits is presented to Audit and Governance committee, however based on lessons learnt from 2020/21 their programme will be more flexible and first agreeing the first quarter programme and adjusting from there.
- The council is committed to transparency with the following items published:
 - Data related to the finances of the council including financial transactions exceeding £500 on our [open data pages](#) and the pay of our staff on our [senior management team page](#).
 - The research and statistics available on our [Facts and Figures website](#)
 - [Meetings and decisions](#) are published on the council's website
 - Details of the [strategic partnerships](#) (though not all up-to-date)
 - [Plans, policies and procedures](#) published (though search needs improving)
- The council has seen a significant increase in Subject Access Requests which is creating pressure on the team and missing timescale of delivery. The council received 1,146 FOI (Freedom of Information) and EIR



(Environment Information Requests) and exceeded the Information Commissioners Office threshold of 90% requests handled within timescale.

- The council is updating its recruitment policy to ensure there is not misinterpretation of the approach to being fair and open; there will also be a review of market forces supplement to ensure remains relevant. In addition measures can also be put in place to address the gender pay gap in both recruitment and retention.
- There was a review of significant partnership assurance during the year which implement some changes in process, the partnership framework will be reviewed this year and that the profiles published on the website are clearer and up to date.
- Modern.gov is the system the council uses to produce and publish governance reports. This was re-commissioned in 2021/22 and the following year will aim to maximise the features available to aid transparency. In 2020/21 there were * number of meetings where the public were excluded. These are reported to full council in the leaders report.

Continuous improvement

- Ensure details of significant partnership profiles are up-to-date on the council's website
- Implement improved and ease of access performance information for staff, members and the public
- Make the most of new features on Modern.gov

6. Assurances

Directors Composite Assurance Statement - Economy and Place

As a Director, I am responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of governance arrangements, risk management processes and the system of internal control operating within my service area(s) which includes review of manager's assurance.

Positive Governance Initiatives:

- Performance and risks are regularly reviewed by service managers, assistant directors and at Directorate Management Team working with the Head of Corporate Performance to feed into regular corporate reporting to management board and cabinet in relation to progress on delivery plan actions. Introduction of Member Oversight and Improvement sessions have provided opportunity to discuss key issues and identify development and improvement opportunities.
- Monthly briefings held with relevant Cabinet Members using corporate format to ensure relevant issues and updates on key projects are covered. Recent introduction of Economy and Place cabinet member group meetings allow for consideration of cross portfolio issues affecting the directorate.
- Comprehensive scheme of delegation in place covering all aspects of the Directorate which is regularly reviewed and updated to take account of changes and new legislation
- Programme and projects board terms of reference developed and reviewed to cover all capital projects in place throughout the year and recent strengthening of governance through the roll out of the corporate model for the management of the capital programme. The delivery model will ensure capacity to deliver and involvement of legal, finance, procurement and other key functions to provide assurance and support.
- The transfer of the lead commissioning role for Hoople services from the Directorate to the corporate centre following the my appointment as a director on the Hoople Board has been a positive move providing clear separation between the provider and commissioner going forward. This has supported the further development of Hoople to offer a wider range of services including the provision of property works and building cleaning from April 2021.
- Over the past year and during the Coronavirus pandemic the directorate rigorously followed the governance processes for emergency decision making. This ensured quick decisions could be taken in consultation with statutory officers providing the necessary assurance whilst responding to the urgent need to take action.

Significant Control and Governance issues identified:



- A best value review, recent internal audits and investigations into the management of the public realm partnership contract, including in relation to the delivery of major projects have identified a number of issues which require improvement.

Planned action(s) to address significant control and governance issues:

- An improvement action plan to address the issues identified in relation to the public realm partnership contract is being developed and external independent expertise is being sourced to lead implementation working with the Chief Executive, s151 Officer and Solicitor to the Council.

I have read and reviewed all manager's checklist relevant to my service area: yes

I have read and reviewed all significant partnership self assessment relevant to my area: yes

Name: Richard Ball

Title: Director Economy and Place

Date: 1.6.21

Directors Composite Assurance Statement - Children and Families

As a Director, I am responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of governance arrangements, risk management processes and the system of internal control operating within my service area(s) which includes review of manager's assurance.

Positive Governance Initiatives:

Implementation of Signs of Safety

Significant Control and Governance issues identified:

Between 2018 and 2021 a series of critical external events occurred raising questions as to the effectiveness of Herefordshire's Children's Services, culminating in the latest critical judgement in early April 2021 from His Hon Justice Keenan. Of significance this latest judgement was not, the first concerns His Hon Justice Keenan raised regarding Herefordshire Children's Services.

Between the 11 June and 22 June 2018 Ofsted inspected Herefordshire Children's Services and undertook two further focus visits in January 2019 and again in December 2019.

Planned action(s) to address significant control and governance issues:

The recent Judgement published on the 16 April 2021, by The Hon Justice Keenan, together with the lack of tangible improvement, has resulted in significant changes within the directorate. Including the establishment of a Children's Services Improvement Board, independently chaired by a DfE advisor, who has been appointed by the Minister for Children and Families, in line with a 12- month non- statutory notice to improve, which was served on the Council on the 18 May 2021.

I have read and reviewed all manager's checklist relevant to my service area: yes

I have read and reviewed all significant partnership self assessment relevant to my area: yes

Name: Catherine Knowles

Title: Interim Director Children and Families

Date: 10.6.2021

Directors Composite Assurance Statement - Adults and Communities

As a Director, I am responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of governance arrangements, risk management processes and the system of internal control operating within my service area(s) which includes review of manager's assurance.

Positive Governance Initiatives:



- An enhanced core directorate and leadership team programme of work; with standing items of: good news, health and safety, concerns and actions, and financial awareness, followed by a focused meeting on directorate performance, risk and project progress
- Performance and programme boards across four service areas, which collectively feed into core DLT and then management board, and from management board to Core DLT and then the four service areas
- The performance and audit dashboard utilized within core DLT and Management board
- Regularity of discussion of risk reporting, action planning and monitoring of improvements made
- Budget awareness, and repeat of budget security, monitoring and effective use of resources to maximise staff development and customer service
- Supervision policy and auditing cycle.

Significant Control and Governance issues identified:
None noted

Planned action(s) to address significant control and governance issues:
None noted

I have read and reviewed all manager's checklist relevant to my service area: yes
I have read and reviewed all significant partnership self assessment relevant to my area: yes

Name: Stephen Vickers
Title: Director Adults and Communities
Date: 16.06.2021

Directors Composite Assurance Statement - Monitoring Officer

As the monitoring officer I am responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of governance arrangements, risk management processes and the system of internal control operating across the council including review of statutory officer assurance statements.

Name:
Title:
Date:
To be completed for final version

Directors Composite Assurance Statement - 151 Officer

As the 151 officer I am responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of governance arrangements, risk management processes and the system of internal financial controls operating across the council.

Name:
Title:
Date:
To be completed for final version

Internal Audit Annual Opinion

To be completed for final version

Statement and opinion - Leader of Herefordshire Council

Name:
Title:
Date:
To be completed for final version

Statement and opinion – Chief Executive of Herefordshire Council

Name:
Title:
Date:
To be completed for final version

End note for record



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