



UPDATE ON ACTIVITY TO DELIVER IMPROVEMENTS IN GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS DURING 2024/25

Core Principle	Area for Improvement	Activity in 2024/25
<p>Core Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law</p>	<p>We will continue to review the council's Constitution and associated documents to simplify and enhance visibility across officers, Members and residents.</p>	<p>We continue to review the council's Constitution and associated documents to simplify and enhance visibility across officers, Members and residents. In October, a report was taken to full Council to propose amendments to the constitution in relation to: functions of Audit and Governance Committee including recruitment and appointment of Independent Persons to Audit and Governance Committee; functions of Planning and Regulatory Committee; clarification of the Planning Code and functions rules; amendment to Fostering Panel membership to reflect practice; amendment to employment rules; amendment to the corporate scheme of delegation; amendment to enable consequential changes to be made to the Constitution; clarification to call-in; and role description for position of chair and vice chairperson.</p>
	<p>We will continue to promote a culture of accountability and strong ethical values through additional training to Officers to support the documentation of evidence-based decision making and reporting.</p>	<p>Engagement through Leadership Group, All Staff Briefings and collaboration across Corporate Leadership Team and individual Directorate Teams has taken place throughout 2024/25 ensuring that information about the council's strategic priorities and planned activity is shared in a timely way to enable informed decision making at all levels across the organisation. Mandatory training to be completed by 31 March 2025 includes the following modules which will support decision making and reporting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Access & Information Governance • Information Security • Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) <p>Additional training has been provided through the council's Leadership Group in 2024/25 to support decision making and reporting: Equality Impact Assessments, the role of Scrutiny, Impact of Procurement Reforms alongside regular updates on the council's financial position and performance.</p>
	<p>Improvements to governance arrangements for council business ventures will be delivered in 2024/25, to ensure lines of responsibility and</p>	<p>The Shareholder Committee forms part of the overall governance arrangements for Herefordshire Council in relation to companies and other legal entities which are wholly or partly owned or</p>

	<p>accountability are clearly defined and delegations of authority are formally agreed. These principles will provide a robust control framework, supported by an adequate audit trail and promote further transparency in decision making.</p>	<p>controlled by the Council. The Committee has met during 2024/25 to review the position and performance of companies in which the council has a legal interest. The Committee holds ensures transparent reporting of the council's interests.</p>
<p>Core Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement</p>	<p>Improved co-ordination of the council's internal and external inspection and regulatory framework, with a centralised record of all priority recommendations to enable proactive monitoring of implementation.</p>	<p>Internal and external recommendations for ongoing monitoring are managed through 'AuditBoard': an integrated tool which is now used by Council Staff, Internal Audit (SWAP) and Members of the Audit & Governance Committee. Training has been provided to users and the Internal Audit in-year update reports are informed by data recorded in this tool.</p>
	<p>Continuous review and update of council strategies and policies which support stakeholder engagement and transparency; aligned to the council's wider transformation programme.</p>	<p>The Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-28, approved by Council in May 2024, identifies the council's strategies and plans that will support delivery of priorities. As part of routine activity during 2024/25, these plans and strategies are subject to in-year review and updates are made accordingly. Collaboration and engagement across teams, and review by the Corporate Leadership Team, ensures that relevant strategies and policies are aligned to the Transformation Strategy.</p>
	<p>The appointment of an independent Member to the Audit & Governance Committee to provide specialist knowledge and insight and complement the skills and experience of existing Members.</p>	<p>The Committee appointed an independent Member in September 2024. Training and information has been provided to the newly appointed Member to support delivery in the role.</p>
<p>Core Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits</p>	<p>Improvements to the council's performance monitoring arrangements in 2024/25 will support transparent and timely reporting aligned to the council's revised corporate priorities and key objectives.</p>	<p>A review of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for all levels of reporting and refresh of internal external Performance Reporting is underway and will be completed in 2024/25. A new Performance Management system has been procured to support monitoring and transformation of reporting outputs. A Data, Intelligence & Performance Strategy is currently being developed to reshape the approach to performance and performance monitoring across the council.</p>
	<p>Development of annual Service Plans to outline service area priorities and key areas of focus to achieve the Council Plan objectives.</p>	<p>The Council Plan sets out the council's vision across four priority areas: People, Place, Growth and Transformation. The annual Delivery Plan underpins the Council Plan and individual Service Plans provide a framework to support effective performance management and to ensure activity is aligned to the priorities and principles of the Delivery Plan and Council Plan. Work to finalise Service Plans has progressed during 2024/25; in June 2024, a</p>

		workshop took place with the council's Leadership Group to review existing service plans and standardise processes to develop the plans. The outcomes from this workshop have been taken forward to inform the production of Service Plans.
	Consideration of environmental, social and economic arrangements as part of the council's wider deliverables, governance and decision making processes.	Decision making across the council is supported by a clear governance framework and this ensures appropriate review and challenge of information across relevant teams including Finance, Legal, Governance, Risk, Equalities. Where appropriate, decisions are aligned to the priorities of the approved Council Plan.
<p>Core Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes</p>	<p>In addition to improvements in performance monitoring arrangements, the council has identified areas for improvement in its approach to risk management to strengthen oversight of strategic risks and support the identification of robust mitigating actions.</p>	<p>During 2024/25, the council has revised its Risk Management Strategy. The draft Strategy was presented to the Audit & Governance Committee in September 2024 and since that date, activity to review and update the council's risk management arrangements has continued: the Draft Risk Management Strategy has been revised to incorporate best practice recommendations from the council external risk management consultants and a Risk Management Workshop is planned for January 2025 to consider the council's risk appetite and risk tolerance and to review the Corporate Risk Register.</p> <p>The Corporate Risk Register will be updated and the Strategy will be finalised by March 2025.</p>
	<p>Work to deliver the council's programme of THRIVE transformation activity has continued during 2023/24 with engagement through regular briefings to staff and the council's Leadership Group. Work to develop a new council operating model will be finalised in 2024/25.</p>	<p>The council's future target operating model was launched in 2024 and has been communicated across the organisation through staff briefings and the staff conference. To take the Thrive transformation programme and organisational strategy forward at pace, the council appointed a Director of Strategy & Transformation in November 2024 and a priority area of focus is completion of the Thrive Transformation Strategy in 2024/25.</p> <p>The Strategic Transformation Board has been established to finalise work programmes and improvement activity that will support the implementation of the council's new target operating model.</p> <p>As part of this work, robust plans will be developed to ensure the council is able to demonstrate return on investment for transformational programmes.</p>
<p>Core Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability</p>	<p>Continued development of leadership skills across the organisation to empower leaders at</p>	<p>The council provides a range of learning and development opportunities for staff, delivered through the Learning & Organisational Development Team. This includes Mandatory</p>

<p>of its leadership and the individuals within it</p>	<p>all levels with the skills to inspire, guide others and drive the council forward.</p>	<p>Training modules as well as opportunities through 'My Learning Hub'.</p> <p>In 2024/25, investment in the council's learning offer, shaped by feedback from staff, has resulted in a programme of learning across a variety of topics.</p> <p>The All Staff learning offer includes 10 topics covering core skills as well as areas identified as a learning gap in the employee survey and through employee feedback. Themes include: Productivity, Impact & Influence, Change Mindset and Presenting. For Managers and Leaders, an additional suite of training is available to support leadership and management skills. This includes topics such as coaching skills, managing change and performance and delegation and empowerment skills.</p> <p>There are also a number of sessions run by internal teams to support and advise colleagues on internal processes and procedures (Herefordshire Council Toolkit). This includes HR Toolkit Sessions, Governance & Decision Making, Training, Procurement & Contract Management Training and Health & Safety.</p> <p>Increased use of the apprenticeship levy funding has been maximised to support level 3, 5 and 7 leadership and management apprenticeships across the council.</p> <p>In 2024 a review of leadership skills and development has taken place, resulting in the introduction of a career conversation framework and leadership development programmes launching in 2025/26. These will enhance and complement the existing offer.</p> <p>Staff are able to discuss and agree training and development needs through the annual 'My Conversation' process.</p>
	<p>Promotion of accountability and responsibility for delivery of budget and performance objectives by front line managers through additional training and development of regular information and enhanced reporting tools.</p>	<p>The council has continued to develop and update its Financial Reporting arrangements during 2024/25, to tailor financial information to the risks of each Directorate, working collaboratively with stakeholders. During 2024/25, regular updates on the council's financial position and performance in the year to date, have been shared with the council's Leadership Group (staff who report directly to a member of the Corporate Leadership Team) and</p>

		<p>through All Staff Briefings. At the Staff Conference in September 2024, an update by the Director of Finance was shared with all attendees. Planned activity over the remainder of 2024/25 and into 2025/26 includes a review of the reporting tools available through the council's finance system (Business World) to increase automation and simplification of financial information to aid budget management and decision making.</p>
<p>Core Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management</p>	<p>A review of the council's risk management arrangements to ensure consistency, improved accountability and robust identification of actions to mitigate risk.</p>	<p>During 2024/25, the council has revised its Risk Management Strategy. The draft Strategy was presented to the Audit & Governance Committee in September 2024 and since that date, activity to review and update the council's risk management arrangements has continued: the Draft Risk Management Strategy has been revised to incorporate best practice recommendations from the council external risk management consultants and a Risk Management Workshop is planned for January 2025 to consider the council's risk appetite and risk tolerance and to review the Corporate Risk Register. The Corporate Risk Register will be updated and the Strategy will be finalised by March 2025.</p>
	<p>Self-assessment against the CIPFA Financial Management Code to identify actions for improvement to support financial sustainability through effective financial management.</p>	<p>This activity is underway and is planned to be completed as part of closedown activity for the year ending 31 March 2025.</p>
<p>Core Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability</p>	<p>Improved monitoring of recommendations arising from the council's internal and external audit framework to ensure timely delivery of management actions.</p>	<p>Internal and external recommendations for ongoing monitoring are managed through 'AuditBoard': an integrated tool which is now used by Council Staff, Internal Audit (SWAP) and Members of the Audit & Governance Committee. Training has been provided to users and the Internal Audit in-year update reports are informed by data recorded in this tool.</p>
	<p>Integration of equality impact assessments at the initial stages of developing new strategic, policies, functions or services to understand the potential impacts on individuals, and groups, in our communities and ensure effective consideration of equality, diversity and cohesion in all key decision making.</p>	<p>The process to assess the equality impact of council decisions, activity and policies has been reviewed during 2024/25 and refreshed Equality Impact Assessment Guidance is available on the council's intranet for all Officers to consider. In addition, an interactive training session was delivered to the council's Leadership Group in October 2024.</p> <p>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) training is included in the council's Mandatory Training Programme for 2025.</p>