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TONBRIDGE & MALLING
BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE SERVICES

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5 April 2019

COUNCIL - TUESDAY, 9TH APRIL, 2019

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at the Tuesday, 9th April, 2019 meeting of the Council, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda No Item

18. **Audit Committee Annual Report (Pages 3 - 12)**

Item AU 19/16 referred from Audit Committee minutes of 1 April 2019

19. **Local Code of Corporate Governance (Pages 13 - 36)**

Item AU 19/17 referred from Audit Committee minutes of 1 April 2019

J E BEILBY
Chief Executive

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Item AU 19/16 referred from Audit Committee minutes of 1 April 2019

AU 19/16 AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

The report of the Chairman of the Audit Committee aimed to inform the Council of the means by which the Committee had provided independent assurance to those charged with governance on the adequacy of the risk management framework, the internal control environment and the integrity of financial reporting and annual governance processes. The report summarised the work carried out by the Committee during 2018/19 and concluded that the required assurance set out in the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Guidance had been provided by the Audit Committee to those charged with governance. The Leader of the Council thanked the Chairman and the members of the Audit Committee for their due diligence over the previous twelve months.

RECOMMENDED: That the Annual Report be presented to the Council as independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework, the internal control environment and the integrity of the financial reporting and annual governance processes.

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TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

AUDIT COMMITTEE

01 April 2019

Report of the Chair of the Audit Committee

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Council

1 AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

This report is produced to inform Council on how the Audit Committee has provided independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework, the internal control environment and the integrity of the financial reporting and annual governance processes. It is recommended that the Audit Committee agree that this report is presented to Council to support this assurance.

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 The Accounts & Audit (England) Regulations impose a responsibility on a local authority “for ensuring that the financial management of the body is adequate and effective and that the body has a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of that body’s functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.”
- 1.1.2 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) sets out the role of Audit Committees in their Practical Guidance for Local Authorities 2018. This states that “*the purpose of the Audit Committee is to provide to those charged with governance independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework, the internal control environment and the integrity of the financial reporting and annual governance processes.*”
- 1.1.3 The Audit Committee comprises nine Members. The Committee has four meetings each year at which reports submitted by Officers and the External Auditor are considered. By consideration of these reports and matters raised within them it is considered that the Audit Committee fulfils the core functions of an Audit Committee as set out in the CIPFA Guidance and is able to give independent assurance to the Council to meet the requirements of the Accounts & Audit (England) Regulations.
- 1.1.4 The core functions of the Audit Committee are dealt with in the following paragraphs.

1.2 Assurance Statements

- 1.2.1 In April 2018 the Committee endorsed the revised Local Code of Corporate Governance that sets out how the council will comply with the principles of the 2016 CIPFA/SOLACE (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives) “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016”.
- 1.2.2 The Committee is required to consider and approve the contents of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS), which took place in July 2018. The AGS explains how the council complies with the Local Code of Corporate Governance and the Accounts & Audit Regulations.
- 1.2.3 The AGS is supported by signed Assurance Statements provided by members of the core Management Team and the three statutory officers and is prepared by way of a self-assessment questionnaire and supporting evidence. No significant concerns were raised as a result of this exercise.
- 1.2.4 At the April 2018 Audit Committee meeting there was confirmation from both Management Team and Audit Committee that the council had complied with International Standards on Auditing.

1.3 Internal Audit Function

- 1.3.1 The Audit Committee has a role in relation to the council’s Internal Audit function to: -
- Oversee its independence, objectivity, performance and professionalism.
 - Support the effectiveness of the internal audit process.
 - Promote the effective use of internal audit within the assurance framework.
- 1.3.2 The Audit Committee received a number of reports to oversee the role of the Internal Audit function.
- 1.3.3 The Annual Internal Audit and Fraud Plan for 2018/19 was presented to the Audit Committee in April 2018 and they were able to consider the content prior to recommending approval.
- 1.3.4 In July 2018 the Audit Committee was presented with a report from the Chief Audit Executive as a summary of supporting evidence to the AGS. This report gave the Chief Audit Executive’s opinion that the council had maintained an adequate and effective internal control environment.
- 1.3.5 The Audit Committee is required to consider the effectiveness of Internal Audit on an annual basis. This review was based upon evidence produced and the view of Management Team. A report was submitted to the Audit Committee in July 2018 which reported that Management Team opinion on the effectiveness of Internal

Audit was "Good". Members considered the findings of this review and endorsed the opinion that the effectiveness of Internal Audit was "Good".

- 1.3.6 It is a requirement of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) that periodic self-assessments are conducted to evaluate conformance with the PSIAS Code of Ethics and Standards. A self-assessment was undertaken in 2018 which established that we continue to generally conform to the Code of Ethics and Standards that constitute the PSIAS. Some minor areas for development were identified that relate to changes made to the Standards in April 2017 where existing processes should be documented/formalised; only two areas were identified for specific action and therefore assessed as Partially Conforms. The action plan to address these two areas was reported to Committee in October 2018.
- 1.3.7 The Audit Committee was given a report in July 2018 on the work completed by Internal Audit and Fraud in the previous year that detailed how resources had been used. The report also covered a number of performance measures to assist the Audit Committee to assess the performance and effectiveness of the function.
- 1.3.8 The Internal Audit Charter is a key document in the delivery of Internal Audit setting out the purpose, authority and responsibilities of the service which was subject to review at the January 2019 meeting of the Audit Committee.
- 1.3.9 The Internal Audit Charter gives the Audit and Assurance Manager (as Chief Audit Executive) the right to raise issues directly with the Chair of the Audit Committee if considered necessary. This would only occur in circumstances where the Audit and Assurance Manager considered that the Chair of the Audit Committee needed to be made aware of significant assurance concerns. There have not been any instances where this has been considered necessary.
- 1.3.10 Throughout the year the Audit Committee received a number of reports updating Members of the progress of work carried out by Internal Audit and Fraud against the Annual Plan. These reports informed the Audit Committee of internal audit's opinion on the audits undertaken and gave additional information where a limited or no assurance was given.

1.4 Audit Committee Responsibilities

- 1.4.1 The responsibilities of the Audit Committee are set out in the Constitution of the Council.

1.5 Risk Management Arrangements and Control Environment

- 1.5.1 The Audit Committee is required to consider the effectiveness of the council's risk management arrangements and the control environment. The Members are required to review the risk profile for the council and seek assurances that action is being taken on risk-related issues, including partnerships with other organisations.

- 1.5.2 The risk profile for the council is undertaken as part of the audit needs assessment to identify those areas where Internal Audit is most effective.
- 1.5.3 The Risk Management Strategy is the framework for setting out the responsibilities for ensuring that a sound risk management process is in place. The strategy is reviewed by the Audit Committee on an annual basis and this review took place in January 2019.
- 1.5.4 The Risk Management Strategy requires Management Team to escalate any relevant risks to the Strategic Risk Register for reporting to this Committee biannually with changes highlighted. In 2018/19 the Committee received the Strategic Risk Register in July 2018, and were asked to note the emergence of a new strategic risk concerning the procurement of the waste services contract, and in January 2019.
- 1.5.5 The strategy states that Audit Committee Members will receive risk management training during their term of office. This training was last undertaken in April 2017 with further training planned for after the May 2019 Local Elections.
- 1.5.6 The Insurance Officer maintains a record of all claims made against the council which are reported to the Audit Committee half-yearly. These reports also inform Members of the steps being taken to minimise similar claims being made.
- 1.5.7 All reports to Council require a risk assessment of the issues involved to be reported as part of the consideration of the report.

1.6 Assurance Framework and Planning

- 1.6.1 The assurance framework is the overall process that provides evidence to support the AGS. The Audit Committee has a responsibility to understand what assurance is available to support the AGS.
- 1.6.2 The AGS was presented to Members at the meeting of July 2018. The supporting evidence to the AGS consisted of a document setting out the areas of the assurance framework to be considered with an explanation of evidence that supported the conclusions of the AGS.

1.7 Value for Money and Best Value

- 1.7.1 One specific area for the Audit Committee should be consideration of the external auditor opinion on value for money as set out in the codes of audit practice. In addition, the Audit Committee should consider what other assurances are available in relation to identified value for money risks and highlight areas for improvement. (CIPFA Audit Committee Guidance).
- 1.7.2 The External Auditor, Grant Thornton, produced their Annual Audit Letter relating to the year ended 31 March 2018 which was presented to the Audit Committee at their meeting of October 2018.

- 1.7.3 The report concluded that the external auditor was satisfied that in all significant respects the council put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2018.
- 1.7.4 As part of the embedded system for achieving value for money all Council reports contain a section where value for money is considered.

1.8 Countering Fraud, Bribery and Corruption

- 1.8.1 The Audit Committee role is defined as having an oversight of the strategy to counter fraud and to assess whether or not it meets recommended practice and standards. In March 2019 an independent review of the fraud team was undertaken, results will be reported to the July 2019 Committee as part of the Annual Report.
- 1.8.2 The Audit Committee is responsible for the review of the policies relating to countering fraud, bribery and corruption and anti-money laundering. In January 2019 it reviewed the Whistleblowing Policy and recommended that it was endorsed by the General Purposes Committee. In the same meeting the anti-fraud policies were reviewed and, subject to any amendments, subsequently approved.
- 1.8.3 The Audit Committee also receives updates on the progress of the National Fraud Initiative results and other work undertaken by the Fraud Team as part of the audit and fraud updates to every meeting. The work of the Fraud Team reported to the Committee in 2018/19 to March 12th 2019 included amounts to be repaid to the Council due to fraud and error of £71,387.68 with an increased annual liability of £76,799.67; a total of 109 civil penalties were issued in the amount of £7,630.
- 1.8.4 The Whistleblowing Policy requires the Audit Committee to be informed of the outcome of any investigations arising from concerns raised under it. No such matters have been drawn to the attention of the Committee in the period covered by the report.

1.9 External Audit

- 1.9.1 The Audit Committee should receive all reports from the external auditor and monitor action to be taken that arises from them.
- 1.9.2 The Audit Committee has received copies of all external auditor reports during the year and has been able to consider the content. The external auditor provides a representative to all Audit Committee meetings where the Audit Committee is able to raise questions regarding the content of reports.

1.10 Financial Reporting

1.10.1 Local Authority accounts are produced in line with guidance set out by CIPFA. The role of the Audit Committee with regard to these financial statements is not one of detailed knowledge of this guidance but is more aligned to focus on financial reporting and financial governance rather than on the wider issues of spending and performance.

1.10.2 The CIPFA Guidance identifies areas that the Audit Committee should be concerned with as follows: -

- reviewing the narrative report to ensure consistency with the statements and the financial challenges and risks facing the council in the future
- reviewing whether the narrative report is readable and understandable by a lay person
- identifying the key messages from each of the financial statements and evaluating what that means for the council in future years
- monitoring trends and reviewing for consistency with what is known about financial performance over the course of the year
- reviewing the suitability of accounting policies and treatments
- seeking explanations for changes in accounting policies and treatments
- reviewing major judgemental areas, e.g. provisions
- seeking assurances that preparations are in place to facilitate the external audit.

1.10.3 The Audit Committee received the Statement of Accounts at the meeting of July 2018. This report gave the Audit Committee assurance that the accounts were presented in compliance with required legislation and best practice guidance. Following consideration of the accounts and a detailed report giving evidence of how compliance is achieved the Audit Committee agreed to endorse the Statement of Accounts and supporting documents. This was accompanied by the Audit Findings Report from the external auditor on the outcome of the audit of the accounts, and subsequently they issued an unqualified audit opinion on the financial statements and value for money conclusion.

1.11 Partnership Governance

1.11.1 The latest CIPFA Guidance identifies that the Audit Committee should review assurances over partnerships to ensure that arrangements are satisfactorily established and are operating effectively.

1.11.2 The arrangements for significant partnerships are covered as part of the audit planning process and covered within individual audits as appropriate. In 2018/19 there was one substantial new partnership entered into; the South West Kent Waste Partnership (comprising Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Kent County Council). This was included in the 2018/19 Audit Plan as a watching brief with any issues/concerns to be escalated to the Audit Committee as appropriate, this escalation was not required.

1.12 Treasury Management

1.12.1 Although it is not included as a core objective of the Audit Committee, the CIPFA Guidance recognises that Treasury Management scrutiny may be a function of some Audit Committees to meet the requirements of the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice.

1.12.2 The Committee receive regular updates on Treasury Management including the treasury management mid-year review and annual report. At the meeting of January 2019 Members of the Audit Committee reviewed the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Strategy for 2019/20 and recommended it be adopted by the Cabinet and full Council.

1.13 Training

1.13.1 The Chair and Members of the Audit Committee receive in-house and or external training at varying intervals to assist with the understanding of the issues considered.

1.13.2 Training needs identified include Treasury Management and Risk Management and these commenced with Risk Management training in April 2017. Further training needs identified are addressed as and when required. The next round of training will be undertaken after the May 2019 Local Elections to ensure any new Members of the Committee are included.

1.14 Conclusion

1.14.1 The evidence in the preceding paragraphs explains how the Audit Committee has overseen the core functions of an Audit Committee as defined in the CIPFA Guidance.

1.14.2 As stated at 1.1.2 the CIPFA Guidance identifies that the purpose of the Audit Committee 'is to provide those charged with governance independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework, the internal control environment and the integrity of the financial reporting and annual governance processes.' This report acts to provide that independent assurance to Council.

1.15 Legal Implications

The Audit Committee role is based upon the CIPFA Guidance and meets the requirements of the Accounts & Audit (England) Regulations.

1.16 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.16.1 The Audit Committee has a role considering the external opinion on value for money. This has been undertaken as outlined in section 1.7 of this report.

1.17 Risk Assessment

1.17.1 The Audit Committee consideration of risk assessment is covered in section 1.5 of this report.

1.18 Equality Impact Assessment

1.18.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.19 Recommendations

1.19.1 That Members of the Audit Committee consider this report and recommend that it is presented to Council to provide independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework, the internal control environment and the integrity of the financial reporting and annual governance processes.

Background papers:

contact: Vivian Branson

Nil

Councillor Vivian Branson
Chair of the Audit Committee

Item AU 19/17 referred from Audit Committee minutes of 1 April 2019

AU 19/17 LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The joint report of the Chief Executive and the Director of Central Services reminded Members that the Local Code of Corporate Governance had been substantially updated in 2017. Members were advised that following the adoption of the Council's new Constitution on 31 July 2018 the Local Code had been revisited and no further amendments were proposed. However, Members' attention was drawn to recent changes in Data Protection legislation and the need to update the 'Managing Data' and 'Respecting the Rule of Law' sections of the Local Code to reflect this. With regard to the latter section, and in particular the item 'Dealing with breaches of legal and regulatory provisions effectively' the Committee asked that the final paragraph be amended to read: 'The Council has appointed a Data Protection Officer, in accordance with GDPR, to ensure that following an internal investigation data breaches are reported to the ICO where necessary.'

RECOMMENDED: That, subject to the amendment of Section 1.3 as set out above, the revised Local Code of Corporate Governance, as set out at Annex 1 to the report, be commended for adoption by the Council.

***Referred to Council**

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TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

AUDIT COMMITTEE

01 April 2019

Report of the Chief Executive and Director of Central Services

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Council

1 LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

This report informs Members of the outcome of the annual review of the Local Code of Corporate Governance.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 In April 2017 the Local Code of Corporate Governance was heavily amended, and as part of the exercise in bringing up to date the Local Code, it was noted that a number of changes would also be required to the Council's Constitution as highlighted in the gap analysis which was carried out.

1.1.2 The Constitution was comprehensively re-written, and the new Constitution adopted by Full Council on 31 July 2018. The Local Code has been revisited in the light of the new Constitution, however no amendments are proposed as a result.

1.1.3 Audit Committee will be aware that Data Protection legislation also changed, through the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in May 2018, and the Data Protection Bill currently making its way through parliament. The adoption of new procedures has required the "Managing Data" and "Respecting the Rule of Law" sections of the Local Code to be updated.

1.1.4 Audit Committee may also be aware of the recent central government review of Standards in Local Government. Whilst the report made a number of recommendations, these will require implementation through primary legislation before they take effect, if Government decides to adopt any or all of them. In this regard, the Local Code may require updating in 2020, but no changes are proposed this year.

1.2 Legal Implications

1.2.1 Whilst there is no legal requirement for Council's to develop a Local Code of Corporate Governance, such a Code provides a public document that demonstrates how the Council ensures it operates in a proper way and in accordance with the law.

1.3 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.3.1 There are no financial and value for money considerations arising from the Code.

1.4 Risk Assessment

1.4.1 Adoption of a Local Code of Corporate Governance is seen as good practice in that it demonstrates how the Council ensures it operates in a proper way and in accordance with the law and as such is subject to annual review to ensure it remains fit for purpose. Not to do so may attract unwelcome criticism.

1.5 Equality Impact Assessment

1.5.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.6 Recommendations

1.6.1 Members are asked to **approve** the revised Local Code of Corporate Governance set out at **[Annex 1]** and **commend** for adoption by the Council.

Background papers:

contact: Kevin Toogood

CIPFA/SOLACE – “Delivering Good Governance in
Local Government Framework 2016”

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive

Adrian Stanfield
Director of Central Services

Local Code of Corporate Governance	Supporting Evidence
1. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.	
1.1 Behaving with Integrity	
<p>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 organization</p>	<p>The Council has Codes of Conduct for both Members and Officers. The Member code is founded upon the seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles). This is enforced (where necessary) through the Council's Joint Standards Committee. The Officer code is enforced (where necessary) through disciplinary procedures.</p> <p>In addition the Council has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Equalities Policy • a protocol for member/ officer relations • A Declaration of Interest Register for Members and for staff • A Register of Gifts and Hospitality offered to Members and staff • Financial Procedure Rules • Contracts Procedure Rules • A publicised complaints procedure • A fraud-aware culture, and an anti-fraud and corruption policy which is reviewed and updated annually.
<p>Ensuring members take the lead in establishing specific standard operating principles or values for the organization and its staff and that they are communicated and understood. These should build on the Seven Principles of Public Life</p>	<p>The Council's constitution sets out clearly the standard operating procedures, and any delegation of responsibility from Council (and Cabinet) and the decision making powers of the Council, cabinet and its committees and boards.</p>
<p>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>The Council's constitution clearly sets out the process for holding the executive to account through the debate of items at committees, and a system of reporting to the Council's Overview & Scrutiny committee.</p>

1.2 Demonstrating Strong Commitment to Ethical Values	
Seeking to establish, monitor and maintain the organisation's ethical standards and performance	<p>The Council has a number of policies and Codes which officers and members are expected to adhere to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Code of Conduct for Members and Officers • An Equalities Policy • A Declaration of Interest Register for Members and for staff • A Register of Gifts and Hospitality offered to Members and staff • Financial Procedure Rules • Contracts Procedure Rules • an anti-fraud and corruption policy • a Standards Committee to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members
Underpinning personal behaviour with ethical values and ensuring they permeate all aspects of the organisation's culture and operation	The Code of Conduct for Members is enforced through the Standards process. Where members of staff depart from the officer Code of Conduct or other policies, these may be enforced through disciplinary measures.
Developing and maintaining robust policies and procedures which place emphasis on agreed ethical values	<p>The Council has robust arrangements in place to ensure that it does the right things, for the right people in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. These are monitored and publicized through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's performance reporting arrangements • Procedures for recruitment and training • Decision making practices • Data transparency arrangements, such as • publication of decisions and committee meeting minutes • Partnership governance arrangements
Ensuring that external providers of services on behalf of the organization are required to act with integrity and in compliance with ethical standards expected by the organisation	The Council's Contracts Procedure Rules require standard terms to be included in all contracts, including provisions relating to bribery, equalities and fraud.

1.3 Respecting the Rule of Law	
<p>Ensuring members of staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations</p>	<p>The Council actively recognises the requirements and responsibilities placed on it by law and will act to observe all specific legal requirements placed upon it when taking decisions. Training is provided to new members of staff appropriate to their roles, and ongoing training (in particular in relation to regulatory functions) is also provided on both an ad hoc and programmed basis.</p> <p>This is underpinned by a series of policies and processes to ensure that staff adhere to legal requirements including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a Code of Conduct for Members and Officers • A Declaration of Interest Register for Members and for staff • A Register of Gifts and Hospitality offered to Members and staff • Financial Procedure Rules • Contracts Procedure Rules • an anti-fraud and corruption policy
<p>Creating the conditions to ensure that the statutory officers, other key post holders and members are able to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements</p>	<p>Training is provided to new members upon election, and ongoing training (in particular in relation to regulatory functions) is also provided on both an ad hoc and programmed basis.</p> <p>The Council's Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officers are responsible for ensuring that the Council acts in accordance with the law and that decisions made by the Council, however made, are made lawfully.</p>
<p>Striving to optimize the use of the full powers available for the benefit of citizens, communities and other stakeholders</p>	<p>All departments are encouraged to work closely with the Council's legal team and where necessary to consult the Monitoring Officer to ensure that the most effective use is made of the Council's powers.</p> <p>Legal staff receive regular training and updates when new powers become available to the Council.</p> <p>The Council also strives to utilise its statutory powers to work in the public interest and to the full benefit of its citizens, particularly in relation to regulatory activity.</p>

	<p>All committee reports include a section to ensure any legal implications are fully analysed when making decisions.</p> <p>In addition, many committees (in particular where the Council is carrying out regulatory functions) sit with a legal advisor.</p>
<p>Dealing with breaches of legal and regulatory provisions effectively</p>	<p>Staff in enforcement roles are appropriately trained and (where necessary) professionally qualified in the relevant field.</p> <p>The Council has individual service enforcement policies which set out how breaches are to be investigated and enforced. The Council is also due to adopt a Corporate Enforcement Policy. Investigations are carried out with the assistance of legal advice where needed. Any prospective prosecution is assessed in accordance with the Code for Crown Prosecutors and considered by a senior lawyer before a decision is made.</p> <p>Enforcement staff are encouraged to work closely with the Council's legal team to ensure that the most effective use is made of the enforcement powers available to the Council.</p> <p>In committees where the Council is carrying out a regulatory function, the committee usually sits with a legal advisor.</p> <p>The Council has appointed a Data Protection Officer, in accordance with GDPR, to ensure that data breaches are reported to the ICO where necessary.</p>
<p>Ensuring corruption and misuse of power are dealt with effectively</p>	<p>The Council takes corruption and misuse of power very seriously. The Council has an anti-fraud and corruption strategy and a whistleblowing policy in place.</p> <p>In addition, the Council has a Joint Standards Committee and Code of Conduct for Members which investigates complaints against members.</p> <p>The Council's The Council's Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officers are responsible for ensuring that the Council acts in accordance with the law.</p> <p>All staff are required to confirm their acceptance of all policies, including the anti-fraud and corruption and whistleblowing policies through netConsent. Such policies are ultimately enforceable through disciplinary measures. Internal audit also carry out programmed audits on matters such as corporate crime.</p>

2. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement	
2.1 Openness	
<p>Ensuring an open culture through demonstrating, documenting and communicating the organization's commitment to openness</p>	<p>The Council follows both the mandatory and (where cost effective) recommended provisions of the Local Government Transparency Code for publication of information held by the Council, and has a detailed scheme of publication under the Freedom of Information Act. In addition, in relation to certain decisions made at officer level, the Council has implemented the requirements of the Openness in Local Government Regulations 2014.</p>
<p>Making decisions that are open about actions, plans, resource use, forecasts, outputs and outcomes. The presumption is for openness. If that is not the case, a justification for the reasoning for keeping a decision confidential should be provided</p>	<p>The Council has established arrangements to communicate and consult with Members of the public on the Council's work and key policy changes and this consultation allows the development of strategic priorities and the Corporate Strategy.</p> <p>The Council's Constitution sets out clearly the decision- making powers of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council • The Cabinet (including the Executive Leader and delegated decision-making to the Cabinet Portfolio Holders), • Other Council committees; and • powers delegated to officers and the limits of such delegation <p>The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for reviewing and scrutinizing decisions made by and performance of the cabinet, committees and officers. Decisions made by cabinet, committee or a cabinet member can be subjected to scrutiny via a call-in procedure allowing challenge within five working days of the decision being taken. Feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet, Committees and Advisory Boards is taken into account and given due consideration in the decision-making process.</p>

	<p>Forthcoming key decisions are published in advance at regular intervals. All Member meetings held by the Council are open to the public, unless the items being discussed are considered to be private under the Local Government Act 1972; these may include staffing and legal matters and those of a contractual nature. Where such an exemption applies, it is recorded in the relevant report and minute.</p>
<p>Providing clear reasoning and evidence for decisions in both public records and explanations to stakeholders and being explicit about the criteria, rationale and considerations used. In due course, ensuring that the impact and consequences of those decisions are clear.</p>	<p>Reports to members set out all relevant considerations in order to ensure that any decision taken is rational and lawful. In addition, reports of certain officer level decisions are required to be published under the Openness in Local Government Regulations 2014.</p>
<p>Using formal and informal consultation and engagement to determine the most appropriate and effective interventions/ courses of action.</p>	<p>The Council carries out consultation where this is a legal requirement.</p>
<p>2.2. Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders</p>	
<p>Effectively engaging with institutional stakeholders to ensure that the purpose, objectives and intended outcomes for each stakeholder relationship are clear so that outcomes are successfully achieved and sustainably.</p>	<p>The Council's Corporate Strategy 2016/19 outlines the means by which local stakeholders (including institutional stakeholders) will be engaged and how constructive, challenging relationships will be built.</p> <p>The Council has put in place Committees / Boards with cross-party representation to ensure effective and robust discussion of issues.</p> <p>The Council also has an Overview and Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise decisions made by Cabinet.</p>
<p>Developing formal and informal partnerships to allow for resources to be used more efficiently and outcomes achieved more effectively</p>	<p>The Council has a number of partnerships, such as Shared Service and Joint Working arrangements which are intended to share resources with neighbouring authorities to improve efficiency and economic sustainability.</p>
<p>Ensuring that partnerships are built on trust, a shared commitment to change, a culture that promotes and accepts challenge among partners and that the added value of partnership working is explicit</p>	<p>The Council is in the process of developing a partnership policy to guide these principles and ensure that any partnership adheres to these values.</p>

2.3 Engaging with individual citizens and services users effectively.	
<p>Establishing a clear policy on the type of issues that the organization will meaningfully consult with or involve communities, individual citizens, service users and other stakeholders to ensure that service (or other) provision is contributing towards the achievement of intended outcomes</p>	<p>The Council is clear that it is ultimately accountable to the citizens of Tonbridge & Malling. The Council has a good understanding of who lives, works and plays in the borough and has mechanisms to listen to and respond to their needs, aspirations and concerns.</p> <p>All consultations are published on the Council's website. When considering consultation responses, the Council's decision considers the merit of the responses being made, regardless of the nature of the stakeholder group. The Council carries out consultation when legally required to do so.</p> <p>All reports and decisions include an equalities impact assessment which takes into account whether a decision would have a disproportionate impact on a certain section of society.</p>
<p>Ensuring communication methods are effective and that members and officers are clear about their roles with regard to community engagement</p>	<p>All consultations are published on the Council's website.</p> <p>The Council's constitution sets out the roles of members, and (in particular) cabinet members and their roles with regard to community engagement.</p> <p>Public-facing staff receive training relevant to their roles to ensure that their community engagement roles are clear.</p>
<p>Encouraging, collecting and evaluating the views and experiences of communities, citizens, service users and organisations of different backgrounds including reference to future needs.</p>	<p>The Council has taken action to develop and support effective engagement opportunities with all groups of the local community:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council engages with the Parishes and unparished areas through the Parish Partnership Panel and Tonbridge Forum • The Council promotes the TM Youth Forum that represents the views of young people living in Tonbridge and Malling

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council supports the Tonbridge & Malling Seniors' Forum (TAMS) which promotes and the needs of the older resident. • The Council engages with other key stakeholders through a number of partnerships that the Council has embarked upon. • The Council actively uses complaints received to learn and improve services, whether through the internal complaints system or via the Ombudsman. • The Council operates a petition scheme whereby matters of significant local interest can be raised for discussion at full Council.
Implementing effective feedback mechanisms in order to demonstrate how views have been taken into account.	<p>Consultation responses are reported upon to the relevant committee or board where Members have an opportunity to consider feedback received and how best to respond to such feedback.</p> <p>The Council also has in place a complaints procedure.</p>
Balancing feedback from more active stakeholder groups with other stakeholder groups to ensure inclusivity	When considering consultation responses, the Council's decision considers the merit of the responses being made, regardless of the nature of the stakeholder group.
Taking account of the impact of decisions on future generations of tax payers and service users.	All reports and decisions include an equalities impact assessment which takes into account whether a decision would have a disproportionate impact on a certain section of society.
3. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.	
3.1 Defining Outcomes	
Having a clear vision, which is a clear formal statement of the organisation's purpose and intended outcomes containing appropriate performance indicators, which provide the basis for the organisation's overall strategy planning and other decisions	There is a clear statement of the organisation's purpose in the Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council Corporate Strategy 2017-19. This document sets out the key priorities for the authority and how the Council will work with a range of partners and the local communities towards achieving the objectives.
Specifying the intended impact on, or changes for, stakeholders including citizens and service users. It could be immediately or over the course of a year or longer	<p>Committee reports all contain an assessment of risk of the options being presented for a decision. Additionally, the Audit Committee has a role in scrutinizing corporate risk.</p> <p>Where any decision is recommended, reports contain an analysis of the intended impact or changes for stakeholders and the timescale on which that is anticipated to happen. Decisions</p>

	which may have a disproportionate impact on a certain section of society are subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment.
Delivering defined outcomes on a sustainable basis within the resources that will be available	The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy covers both revenue and capital budgets, and it is this strategy that underpins the budget setting process for the forthcoming year and over the strategy period. The aim of the MTFS is to give us a realistic and sustainable plan that reflects the Council's priorities and takes us into the future. Alongside the MTFS sits a Savings and Transformation Strategy. Its purpose, to provide structure, focus and direction in addressing the significant financial challenge that lies ahead.
Identifying and managing risks to the achievement of outcomes	<p>The Council has arrangements in place to effectively monitor and manage risks to its business through the risk management strategy and strategic and service risk registers.</p> <p>Committee reports all contain an assessment of risk of the options being presented for a decision. Additionally, the Audit Committee has a role in scrutinizing corporate risk.</p>
Managing service users' expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the available resources	The Council is accountable to the citizens of Tonbridge and Malling in delivering its duties and responsibilities. The Council manages relationships with partners and consults the public through a number of mechanisms, including regular reporting to members, partnership arrangements (supported by partnership agreements) and the provisions of the Council's constitution.
3.2. Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.	
Considering and balancing the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies and plans when taking decisions about service provision	<p>Value for money considerations are set out in all committee reports. The social impact of decisions is considered throughout the decision-making process, including the carrying out of an Equalities Impact Assessment where it is considered that a recommendation may have a disproportionate impact on a particular section of society.</p> <p>Where relevant, policies are subject to Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment prior to adoption.</p>
Taking a longer-term view with regard to decision making, taking account of risk and acting transparently where there are	The Corporate Strategy, together with the Medium Term Financial Strategy and supported by the Savings and Transformation Strategy set

potential conflicts between the organisation's intended outcomes and short-term factors such as the political cycle or financial constraints.	out the long term high level objectives of the Council.
Determining the wider public interest associated with balancing conflicting interests between achieving the various economic, social and environmental benefits, through consultation where possible, in order to ensure appropriate trade-offs	Committee reports set out all relevant considerations to enable members to make decisions which are appropriate and lawful.
Ensuring fair access to services	The Council has an equalities policy which seeks to ensure fair access to the Council's services by all sections of society.
4. Determining the interventions necessary to optimize the achievement of the intended outcomes	
4.1. Determining interventions.	
Ensuring decision makers receive objective and rigorous analysis of a variety of options indicating how intended outcomes would be achieved and associated risks, therefore ensuring best value is achieved however services are provided.	<p>Decision making mechanisms are set out in detail in the Council's constitution. Whether a decision is at council, cabinet or committee level it is informed by a report encompassing advice from relevant services across the Council.</p> <p>Where relevant, alternative options are presented within committee reports, with an assessment of the benefits and disadvantages of those options.</p> <p>The Council's enforcement policies will inform a decision where legal or regulatory action is an option and reports will detail the legal implications of such action.</p>
Considering feedback from citizens and service users when making decisions about service improvements or where services are no longer required in order to prioritise competing demands within limited resources	Where appropriate, the Council carries out consultation with stakeholders, which is taken into account in the decision –making process. Consultations are published on the Council's website.

<p>available including people, skills, land and assets and bearing in mind future impacts</p>	<p>In addition, the Council uses its complaints procedure to understand where services can be improved.</p>
<p>4.2 Planning Interventions</p>	
<p>Establishing and implementing robust planning and control cycles that cover strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets</p>	<p>Strategic and operational plans (such as the Corporate Plan) are reviewed on a regular basis.</p> <p>Feedback from consultations is taken into account in the decision making process and reported to the relevant committee, cabinet or Council meeting.</p> <p>The Savings & Transformation Strategy (STS) has been prepared in order to support the achievement of the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy and direct resources in line with the Council's Corporate Strategy. The STS recognizes that there is no one simple solution to addressing the financial challenges, and that the Council needs to embrace transformation in a multitude of ways in order to deliver savings within an agreed timetable. The STS sets out a measured structure and framework for delivering the necessary savings through a series of themes; each theme having a deliverable target.</p>
<p>Engaging with internal and external stakeholders in determining how services and other courses of action should be delivered</p>	<p>The Corporate Strategy, medium term financial strategy and other key policies are set by cabinet or the Council following input from all service directors and the Chief Executive.</p>
<p>Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively, including shared risks</p>	<p>Reports on proposals for shared services contain a risk assessment, and risks are mitigated through the shared service agreements.</p>
<p>Ensuring arrangements are flexible and agile so that mechanisms for delivering goods and services can be adapted to changing circumstances</p>	<p>The Council's Contract Procedure Rules and standard contract terms are reviewed regularly to ensure they are up to date with current best practice.</p>
<p>Establishing appropriate Key Performance Indicators as part of the planning process in order to identify how the performance of services and projects is to be measured.</p>	<p>Performance indicators are monitored within each service and reported to Management Team where appropriate.</p>
<p>Ensuring capacity exists to generate the information required to review service quality regularly</p>	<p>It is the responsibility of service directors and Management Team to ensure sufficient capacity exists.</p>
<p>Preparing budgets in accordance with objectives, strategies and the medium-term financial plan</p>	<p>The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) covers both revenue and capital budgets, and it is this Strategy that underpins the budget setting process for the forthcoming year and over the strategy period.</p>

	<p>Budgetary control is undertaken on a monthly basis by services, who report known variations to Financial Services. These variations along with detailed monitoring of the Councils Salary Budget and Major Income Streams are reported to the Corporate Management Team and then onto Members via the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board as part of the cycle of Councils meetings programme.</p>
<p>Informing medium and long-term resource planning by drawing up realistic estimates for revenue and capital expenditure aimed at developing a sustainable funding strategy</p>	<p>The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) covers both revenue and capital budgets, and it is this Strategy that underpins the budget setting process for the forthcoming year and over the strategy period.</p> <p>The Strategy sets out the high level financial objectives the Council wishes to fulfil over the agreed time span. The Strategy also sets out, based on current financial information, not only the projected budgets for the period, but also the levels of council tax that are projected to be required to meet the Council's spending plans.</p> <p>The aim of the MTFS is to give us a realistic and sustainable plan that reflects the Council's priorities and takes us into the future. Underneath the Strategy sits detailed estimates formulated in conjunction with Services taking into account past outturn, current spending plans and likely future demand levels / pressures. It is acknowledged that circumstances will change and for this reason the Strategy needs to, and will, be kept under regular review.</p>
<p>4.3 Optimising achievement of intended outcomes</p>	
<p>Ensuring the medium term financial strategy integrates and balances service priorities, affordability and other resource constraints</p>	<p>The medium-term financial strategy is aligned with the Corporate Strategy. Service priorities are aligned to the Corporate Strategy.</p>
<p>Ensuring the budgeting process is all-inclusive, taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term</p>	<p>The budget monitoring process considers both revenue and capital budgets.</p> <p>Budget for the following financial year and longer term financial planning through the MTFS takes account of the impacts for service delivery through potential changes in client base, housing need and levels.</p>

	The MTFS takes into account changes in Government Funding where these are known. Where these factors are unknown these are judged by officers and shared and confirmed with Members.
Ensuring the medium-term financial strategy sets the context for ongoing decisions on significant delivery issues or responses to changes in the external environment that may arise during the budgetary period in order for outcomes to be achieved while optimizing resource usage	In considering the preparation of the Budget for the current and future financial years, Chief Officers are asked to identify potential growth issues and savings for future years that can be assessed and included with the MTFS. This may include changes in demand for services, including the growth in property, and proposed changes in fees and charges.
Ensuring the achievement of “social value” through service planning and commissioning	The Council has a Social Value Policy Statement. Whilst the issues of cost and quality remain of key concern, the concept of social value means that where appropriate, the Council can seek to achieve added social benefits in its procurement processes that may otherwise not have been achieved by other means.
5. Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it	
5.1. Developing the entity’s capacity	
Improving resource use through appropriate application of techniques such as benchmarking and other options to determine how resources are allocated so that defined outcomes are achieved effectively and efficiently	The Council works towards improving value for money through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploration of innovative ways of working including potential for joint-working and shared services • Robust budgeting and financial monitoring arrangements including detailed reviews of budgets and potential savings opportunities • Internal and external audit • Publication of annual budget and accounts information
Recognizing the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved	The Council works in partnerships with other authorities in Kent. A commitment to working in partnership is one of the Council’s stated Corporate Objectives.
Developing and maintaining an effective workforce plan to enhance the strategic allocation of resources	The Council has an extensive training programme for council officers including mandatory and voluntary training.

	<p>The Council actively engages with its staff through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team meetings • Regular performance management meetings • The Joint Employee Consultative Committee <p>The HR Strategy incorporates the Council's Workforce Development Plan which is reviewed and updated annually.</p>
5.2. Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals.	
Developing protocols to ensure that elected and appointed leaders negotiate with each other regarding their respective roles early on in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained	The Council examines the capability of its people with governance responsibilities through appraisals, identifying any training gaps – the relevant training programmes are updated accordingly.
Publishing a statement that specifies the types of decisions that are delegated and those reserved for the collective decision making of the governing body	The Council's constitution sets out clearly the decision-making powers of the Council and its bodies and officers.
Ensuring the leader and the chief executive have clearly defined and distinctive leadership roles within a structure whereby the chief executive leads in implementing strategy and managing the delivery of services and other outputs set by members and each provides a check and a balance for the other's authority	the roles of the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive are clearly defined in the Council's Constitution.
Developing the capabilities of members and senior management to achieve effective leadership and to enable the organization to respond successfully to changing legal and policy demands as well as economic, political and environmental changes and risks.	<p>The Council has undertaken steps through the "Peer Review Challenge" to review the effectiveness of the organization.</p> <p>The Council has a training programme for Members and holds regular training sessions (both on a programmed and ad hoc basis) for Members on a variety of topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction training for all new members • Service-specific training, e.g. Community Safety • Committee-specific training, e.g. Audit Committee
Ensuring that there are structures in place to encourage public participation	Consultations are published on the Council's websites. In relation to decisions taken by the Council on planning matters, and certain matters under the Licensing Act 2003, members of the public are able to make both written and oral representations to the committee. The Council also operates a petition scheme.

<p>Holding staff to account through regular performance reviews which take account of training or development needs</p>	<p>Staff have access to appropriate induction training, and ongoing training on both an ad hoc and programmed basis relevant to their roles.</p> <p>The annual appraisal process reviews staff performance and also identifies training needs.</p> <p>Staff training takes place both through internal and external provision as appropriate.</p>
<p>Ensuring arrangements are in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce and support individuals in maintaining their own physical and mental wellbeing</p>	<p>The council has a Health and Wellbeing statement of intent recognizing that the Council's staff are its most valuable asset. The HR Strategy also recognizes the same. The Council has a Joint Employee Consultative Committee which enables employees to raise matters of concern, including health and wellbeing.</p>
<p>6. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management</p>	
<p>6.1. Managing risk</p>	
<p>Recognizing that risk management is an integral part of all activities and must be considered in all aspects of decision making</p>	<p>Risk management practices are embedded within the organisation through the annual service and strategic planning processes, which is used to develop the Council's vision and objectives. This ensures that risks to the achievement of the Council's objectives are identified and managed appropriately. Risks identified are scored on the basis of their likelihood and impact and existing controls and required actions to further mitigate risks are captured in risk registers. The framework sets out the responsibility of Officers leading on areas with partnership arrangements to ensure that the partner has an adequate risk management strategy and sufficient insurance cover to protect the interests of the Council.</p>
<p>Implementing robust and integrated risk management arrangements and ensuring that they are working effectively</p>	<p>The Council has arrangements in place to effectively monitor and manage risks to its business through the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk Management Strategy • Strategic Risk Register • Service Risk Registers • Audit Committee role in scrutinising corporate risk • Consideration of risk in all Committee reports • Annual Governance Statement <p>The strategic and service risk registered are updated regularly.</p>

	<p>Risks associated with decisions are set out on relevant committee, cabinet or council reports.</p> <p>The Council's standard report template requires Officers and Members to carry out a risk assessment of the action recommended in the report ensuring risk is considered in all decision-making of the authority. This assessment also covers legal, financial and value for money considerations and equality issues where relevant.</p>
Ensuring that responsibilities for managing individual risks are clearly allocated.	The service risk registers clearly identify responsibilities for managing individual risks.
6.2. Managing performance.	
Making decisions based on relevant, clear and objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks inherent in the organisation's financial, social and environmental position and outlook	The performance of the Council and its partners in achieving its objectives is monitored and measured by services and their respective Service Management Teams and subsequently Management Team and Members. Individual services are accountable to the Corporate Management Team for operational performance monitoring and measurement and are responsible for taking action to correct any adverse performance, in the first instance, as appropriate.
Ensuring an effective scrutiny or oversight function is in place which provides constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives before, during and after decisions are made thereby enhancing the organisation's performance and that of any organization for which it is responsible (or for a committee system) encouraging effective and constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives to support balanced and effective decision making	The overview and scrutiny committee is responsible for reviewing and scrutinizing the decisions made by and performance of the Cabinet and/ or Committees/ Advisory Boards and Council Officers. Decisions made by Cabinet, a Committee or by a Cabinet Member acting on the recommendation of an Advisory Board can be subjected to scrutiny via a call-in procedure allowing challenge within 5 working days of the decision being taken.
Providing members and senior management with regular reports on service delivery plans and on progress towards outcome achievement	The Council has in place committees & boards with cross-party representation to ensure effective and robust discussion of issues. Relevant boards, committees and the executive are provided with information reports on a regular basis to provide progress reports on service delivery and outcomes.

<p>Ensuring there is consistency between specification stages (such as budgets) and post-implementation reporting (e.g. financial statements)</p>	<p>The medium-term financial strategy is aligned with the Corporate Strategy. Service priorities are aligned to the Corporate Strategy, which ensures consistency between budget setting and service delivery.</p> <p>Capital schemes are subject to evaluation prior to the approval for implementation; the criteria of the evaluations are set by Council.</p> <p>Following the schemes completion a post implementation review will be prepared and shared with members in order to determine the accuracy of the initial evaluation and identify lessons to be learned and considered in future evaluations.</p>
<p>6.3 Robust internal control</p>	
<p>Ensuring effective counter-fraud and anti-corruption measures are in place</p>	<p>The Council has an effective Internal Audit service and Anti-Fraud service in place. The Council also has an Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and Whistleblowing Policy.</p>
<p>Ensuring additional assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control is provided by the internal auditor</p>	<p>The Council has in place arrangements to effectively monitor and manage risks to its business through the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk management strategy • Strategic risk register • Service risk registers
<p>Establishing an audit committee or equivalent group/function which is independent of the executive and accountable to the governing body</p>	<p>The core functions of an audit committee as defined by <i>CIPFA's Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities</i> are fulfilled by the Council's Audit Committee. The Council's Constitution sets out the responsibility of the Audit Committee to provide independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework and associated control environment. To do so, the Audit Committee has adopted a Risk Management Strategy that sets out the roles of Officers and Members in the identification and minimisation of risk.</p>
<p>6.4 Managing Data</p>	
<p>Ensuring effective arrangements are in place for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data, including processes to safeguard personal data</p>	<p>The Council maintains a number of local policies which support and embed information processes. These include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Protection policy • Information Security policy • Records Management policy • Use of removable media policy • Remote access policy

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media policy • Information Asset register • Information Governance Policy <p>The Council has a Data Protection Officer, appointed in accordance with GDPR, with overall responsibility for ensuring the Council follows proper data protection practices. The DPO chairs the Council's Information Governance Group ("IGG") which meets regularly to discuss data protection and related matters within the Council, including data breaches.</p> <p>Individual services have representatives appointed to sit on the IGG and feed back into their services to raise and maintain awareness of the requirements of GDPR.</p>
Ensuring effective arrangements are in place and operating effectively when sharing data with other bodies	The Council is a signatory to the Kent & Medway Information Sharing Agreement, which prescribes the procedures that are to be followed when sharing data with other public sector bodies in Kent. The Data Protection Officer, or his appointed Deputies, attend the Kent & Medway Information Sharing Partnership, which seeks to share best practice under GDPR across all Kent authorities.
Reviewing and auditing regularly the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring	An annual risk-based Internal Audit Plan is prepared to determine the priorities of the internal audit activity, consistent with the organisation's goals. The Plan aims to ensure that sufficient audit assurance work is carried out to enable the Chief Audit Executive to deliver an opinion regarding the adequacy and effectiveness of the internal control arrangements within the Council. Each audit review will cover data quality and accuracy relevant to the subject area.
6.5 Strong public financial management	
Ensuring financial management supports both long-term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance	<p>The Council's Financial Procedure Rules support the provision of high quality financial advice. The Council also acts in consultation with stakeholders. The Council's Internal Audit Service provides assurance on the quality of financial and performance data reported.</p> <p>The ongoing budget setting and monitoring process together with the Medium Term Financial Strategy supports the long-term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance.</p>
Ensuring well-developed financial management is integrated at all levels of	Annual budgets are set with involvement from budget holders across all council services. The MTFS is set considering longer-term risks.

planning and control, including management of financial risks and controls	
7. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability	
7.1 Implementing good practice in transparency	
Writing and communicating reports for the public and other stakeholders in a fair, balanced and understandable style appropriate to the intended audience and ensuring that they are easy to access and interrogate.	<p>The Council has implemented the mandatory and (where cost effective) recommended principles set out in the Local Government Transparency Code. The Council has set up a steering group which meets to discuss changes to the code and its ongoing implementation.</p> <p>Reports for both historic and prospective meetings of the Council and its committees and boards are made available to the public through the Council's website.</p> <p>Where possible, reports are written in a public-facing and non-technical manner. All reports (save those which are exempt as discussed above) are made public and can be accessed through the Council's website.</p>
Striking a balance between providing the right amount of information to satisfy transparency demands and enhance public scrutiny while not being too onerous to provide and for users to understand	Where possible, reports are written in a public-facing and non-technical manner. All reports (save those which are exempt as discussed above) are made public and can be accessed through the Council's website.
7.2 Implementing good practice in reporting	
Reporting at least annually on performance, value for money and stewardship of resources to stakeholders in a timely and understandable way	<p>Annual Statement of Accounts report the Council's financial performance against the original estimate set for that financial year. The statement is prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Code for Local Authority Accounting.</p> <p>Included within the financial statements will be a judgement from the Council's external auditors on value for money and adequate use of resources.</p> <p>Included within the financial statements is the Annual Governance Statement this, is approved by Members and signed by the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council and provides evidence on the Councils adherence to the Code of Corporate Governance.</p>
Ensuring members and senior management own the results reported	The Annual Governance Statement is approved by the leader and Chief Executive, and the financial statements are considered

	and approved by Management Team and the Audit Committee.
Ensuring robust arrangements for assessing the extent to which the principles contained in the framework have been applied and publishing the results on this assessment, including an action plan for improvement and evidence to demonstrate good governance (the annual governance statement)	Compliance is reviewed on an annual basis and reported to Audit Committee.
Ensuring that the framework is applied to jointly managed or shared service organisations as appropriate	Where appropriate, the principles will be applied to shared services.
Ensuring that performance information that accompanies the financial statements is prepared on a consistent and timely basis and the statements allow for comparisons with other, similar, organisations.	Performance information is included as part of the budget setting process.
7.3 Assurance and effective accountability	
Ensuring that recommendations for corrective action made by external audit are acted upon	Responsibility for acting upon recommendations from external audit rests with the relevant service, and is monitored through individual service management teams and the corporate management team.
Ensuring an effective internal audit service with direct access to members is in place, providing assurance with regard to governance arrangements and that recommendations are acted upon	The Council has an effective internal audit service, and an Audit Committee.
Welcoming peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and implementing recommendations	The Council takes an active part in Peer Reviews.
Gaining assurance on risks associated with delivering services through third parties and that this is evidenced in the annual governance statement	Risks are picked up through the contract monitoring process and reported through Audit Committee or a relevant advisory board
Ensuring that when working in partnership, arrangements for accountability are clear and the need for wider public accountability has been recognized and met	Such arrangements are subject to public reports to each authority in the partnership. The Contracts Procedure Rules also ensure that standard contract terms are imposed ensuring proper accountability.