

LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Introduction

The International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector (CIPFA/IFAC 2014) defines governance as follows:

‘Governance comprises the arrangements put in place to ensure that the intended outcomes for stakeholders are defined and achieved.’

The International Framework also states that:

‘To deliver good governance in the public sector, both governing bodies and individuals working for public sector entities must try to achieve their entity’s objectives while acting in the public interest at all times.’ Acting in the public interest implies primary consideration of the benefits for society, which should result in positive outcomes for service users and other stakeholders.

Good Corporate Governance

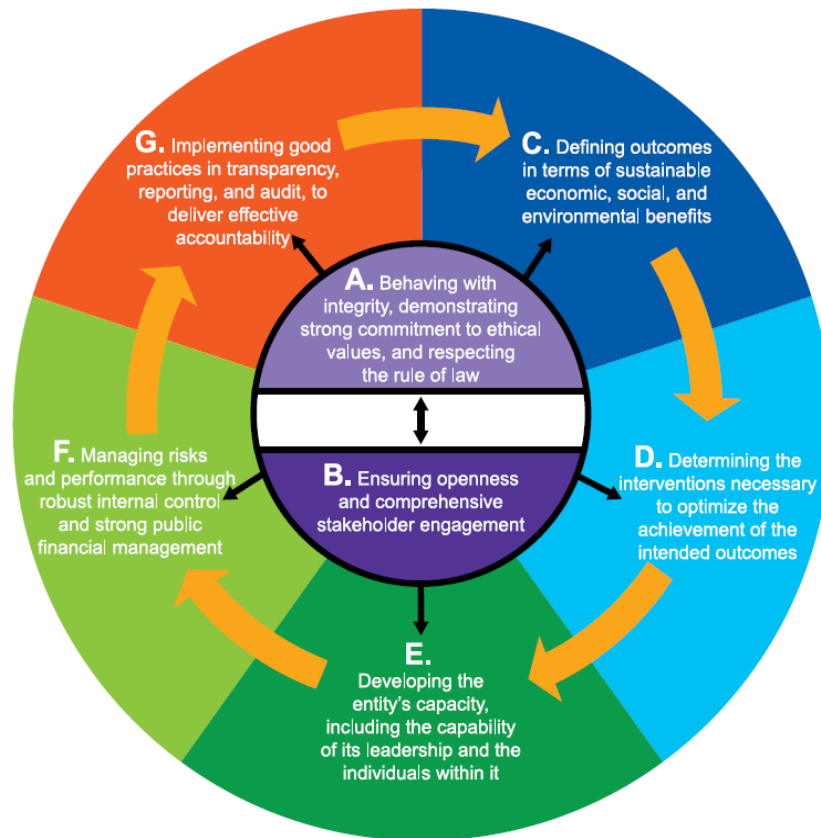
Staffordshire County Council is committed to achieving good corporate governance and this Local Code describes how the council intends to achieve this in an open and transparent way. The Local Code is based upon the CIPFA SOLACE framework ‘Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (April 2016) which replaced the document published in 2007 and amended in 2012.

As laid out in the guidance it *‘is intended to assist authorities individually in reviewing and accounting for their own unique approach. The overall aim is to ensure that resources are directed in accordance with agreed policy and according to priorities, that there is sound and inclusive decision making and that there is clear accountability for the use of those resources in order to achieve desired outcomes for service users and communities’.*

The Local Code is based on the following 7 principles, the first 2 of which underpin the remaining 5 with the overall aim of achieving the intended outcomes whilst acting in the public interest at all times.

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

**Achieving the Intended Outcomes
While Acting in the Public Interest at all Times**



MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Code of Corporate Governance is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it is kept up to date. Where the review identifies that changes are required to the code, the revised Code will be submitted to the Audit & Standards Committee for comments and amendments before including on the Council's intranet.

It is the philosophy of the County Council that responsibility for ensuring good corporate governance is embedded within the organisation, lies with all employees and they take the appropriate steps to ensure their behaviour reflects these values at all times.

The Audit & Standards Committee has responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the Corporate Governance arrangements. The Committee is responsible for approving the Council's annual accounts and responding to the External Auditor's Annual Audit Letter. It also oversees the effectiveness of the Council's governance and risk management arrangements, the internal control environment and associated anti-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements. The standards element of its remit covers the responsibility for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct amongst Members. The detailed terms of reference are included in the Constitution.

<http://moderngov.staffordshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=624&MIId=8894&Ver=4&Info=1>

In addition, the wider Committee arrangements support how the Council uses its resources effectively and efficiently to deliver services for Staffordshire residents

The Council ensures that corporate governance arrangements are kept under continual review by updating, as appropriate, these Committees on:

- The work of Internal and External Audit
- The opinion of other review agencies and inspectorates
- Opinions from the Council's Statutory Officers
- General matters relating to the implementation of the Code
- The production of the Annual Governance Statement and actions planned to address rising governance issues.

The Annual Governance Statement

Each year the Council will publish an Annual Governance Statement to accompany the Annual Accounts. The Statement provides an overall assessment of the Council's corporate governance arrangements and how it adheres to the governance standards set out in this Code. Evidence relating to the principles of this Code is reviewed and analysed to assess the robustness of the Council's governance arrangements. This includes assessments such as:

- Review of the Constitution
- Annual Statement – Member Standards
- Biannual Scrutiny Report to Council
- Head of Internal Audit Annual Report and overall opinion
- External Audit Annual ISA 260 Report
- Other Inspectorate Reports
- Statutory Complaints & Corporate Complaints (including Ombudsman's Reports) Annual Report
- Information Governance Annual Report
- Health and Safety Annual Report
- Annual Pay Policy Statement
- Statements from the Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer regarding the use of their statutory powers

The Statement includes an appraisal of the key controls in place to manage the Council's principal governance risks and the effectiveness of systems and processes governing decision making and financial control. The Statement also provides details of where improvements need to be made. Actions to address significant governance issues are identified and recorded in an action plan. The Annual Governance Statement is audited by the Council's External Auditors as part of the audit of the annual accounts.

The following tables detail how the Council meets the core principles and the systems, policies and procedures it has in place to support this.

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

	Current Arrangements	Action Plan 2019/20
<p>Local government organisations are accountable not only for how much they spend, but also for how they use the resources under their stewardship. This includes accountability for outputs, both positive and negative, and for the outcomes they have achieved.</p> <p>In addition, they have an overarching responsibility to serve the public interest in adhering to the requirements of legislation and government policies. It is essential that, as a whole, they can demonstrate the appropriateness of all their actions and have mechanisms in place to encourage and enforce adherence to ethical values and to respect the rule of law.</p>	<p>Behaving with integrity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codes of conduct for Members & Officers developed and included in key governance document [the Constitution] to ensure that high standards of conduct are understood/maintained. • An Officer Code of Conduct is included within the GO Corporate Training system and behaviours are reinforced through the My Performance Conversation process. • Induction process for all new Members includes information on the standard of behaviour expected including the role of Standards Committee. • Member Code of Conduct • Procedure in place for reporting and administering complaints against Members including breaches of the Member Code of Conduct. • Whistleblowing arrangements for Officers are in place together with Grievance procedures • Member Allowances are determined and approved by the Independent Remuneration Panel • The Audit and Standards Committee is responsible for overseeing the conduct of members and identifying any training needs of members in relation to the Code of Conduct. The Committee receives a report as appropriate regarding the progress of complaints/investigations. An Annual Report of Member Conduct is produced and reported to the Audit & Standards Committee. • Decision making practices include standard formats for executive officer/portfolio holder/Cabinet decisions to assist in ensuring that decisions are taken only when necessary information has been made available including community impact assessments for key decisions. 	<p>A Refresh of the Code of Conduct for Members in line with the March 2019 report to Audit & Standards Committee.</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Head of Law and Democracy</p> <p>Implementation Date: 31st March 2020</p> <p>To continue to complete and embed the recommendations made in the 2018 Gifts and Hospitality audit report which include the declarations of interest</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Head of Law and Democracy</p> <p>Implementation Date: 31st August 2019</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitution includes an employee and Member policy for the acceptance of gifts and hospitality. A register is maintained and published on the County Council website. • All Members declare their interests and these are published on the County Council website which is refreshed annually. • Members' declarations of interests are a standing item on all agendas. Minutes show declarations of interest were sought and appropriate declarations made. • Whistleblowing and Integrity policies are in place. Policies available to members of the public, employees, partners and contractors via the internet and in appropriate contract documentation. • Statutory and corporate complaints procedures and electronic reporting forms are available on the County Council's website. Annual reports are produced and are published on the County Council website. 	
	<p>Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Constitution sets out <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the need to act within the law ○ delegations of the executive, committees and senior officers, and the decision making process to be applied ○ Terms of Reference for committees ○ Scrutiny Function to support ethical decision making • Commissioners of services have a role in developing specifications and contracts and through contract management and management of other arrangements. • Implementation of the People Strategy approved by Cabinet in March 2019. 	
	<p>Respecting the rule of law</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Constitution identifies the Statutory Officers of the County Council namely the Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer, Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer), Director of Adult Social Care, Director of Children's Services, Scrutiny Officer and the Director of Public Health and sets out the respective roles. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy is published on the web site together with the Anti-Money Laundering Policy. There is a whistleblowing hotline together with a concern reporting form which is forwarded on to Internal Audit for review. 	
<p>Core Principle B: - Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement</p>		
<p>Local government is run for the public good; organisations therefore should ensure openness in their activities. Clear, trusted channels of communication and consultation should be used to engage effectively with all groups of stakeholders, such as individual citizens and service users, as well as institutional stakeholders</p>	<p>Openness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic and Delivery Plans describe direction including Vision, Values and Council priorities. • Adoption of a Freedom of Information Act publication scheme • Online council tax information • Authority Transparency pages available on website including the annual transparency report • Agendas, reports and minutes are published on the council's website. Meetings are open to the public unless in the case of exempt items • The Community Impact Assessment toolkit is used for all key decisions and helps ensure that the decisions taken consider a range of potential impacts/risk. Where appropriate, background papers are cited in the standard report format. • Dates for submitting, publishing and distributing timely reports are set and adhered to • Record of decision making and supporting materials published on the County Council website • The Strategic Plan together with the annual delivery (business) plan sets out the priorities and strategic direction for the Council and is reviewed annually. • Quarterly Integrated Performance Reporting covering MTFS, Performance Measures and Delivery Plan monitoring delivery of key requirements. 	
	<p>Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the Councils priority outcomes are contained within the Strategic Plan which is published and communicated to all relevant stakeholders. • The County Council regularly consults with a wide range of stakeholders depending on the topic and relevant audience. Key 	<p>To implement the Peer review recommendation regarding strategic engagement and</p>

	<p>stakeholders include our local MPs, elected members, district leaders and chief executives, other public sector organisations and our voluntary and community sector bodies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relationship with the other 9 local councils is overseen by the monthly meeting of the 10 Chief Executive's and quarterly meetings of the Leaders. • The strategic engagement with the NHS is now overseen through the Sustainability and Transformation Plan Programme Board that is driving change across the whole system • Place leadership across Staffordshire is steered and driven through Network Staffordshire. • SCC reinforce a clear set of principles with all key partnership leads (including across Health and Wellbeing, Children and Families, Safety and Economy) to ensure that all formal partnerships continue to provide a robust framework for identifying and delivering higher level outcomes for Staffordshire. • All consultations are conducted in line with the best practice guidance set out by the Cabinet Office in 2016 (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance). High priority consultations identified through the business planning process are supported by a Corporate Consultation Manager with appropriate support from other support services. In order to ensure consistency and transparency all consultations are hosted on the County Council webpage. • A communications strategy which sets out how the Council will inform and engage with employees, partners, residents and other stakeholders is in place, agreed annually by the senior leadership team and members of cabinet. Annual review and sign off of Communication Plan by SLT Lead:- Head of Communications 	<p>visioning with Partner Organisations.</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Head of Strategy/SLT/CEO</p> <p>Implementation Date: 31st March 2020</p>
	<p>Engaging stakeholders effectively, including individual citizens and service users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Record of public consultations undertaken is published on the Website. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All consultations are delivered using best practice guidelines from the Cabinet Office (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance) • The council seeks the views from individuals, organisations and businesses as part of shaping and commissioning decisions. • All council surveys are delivered online using the corporate approved software called Citizen Space. • Consultation activities are scheduled in line with the Delivery Plan priorities and MTFS commitments. • The council has arrangements to engage with all sections of the community including hard to reach groups. • Community Impact Assessments continue to capture the impact of decisions on our protected groups, with evidence of how services have involved these vulnerable and hard to reach groups. • The work of the Digital project seeks to take account of the citizens needs 	
<i>C Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits</i>		
<p>The long-term nature and impact of many of local government’s responsibilities mean that it should define and plan outcomes and that these should be sustainable. Decisions should further the authority’s purpose, contribute to intended benefits and outcomes, and remain within the limits of authority and resources. Input from all groups of stakeholders, including citizens, service users, and institutional stakeholders, is vital to the success of this process and in balancing competing</p>	<p>Defining outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Strategic Plan sets out the council’s vision and priorities which have been produced following community engagement and involvement. [Current Plan 2018/2022] Annual review of Strategy led by the Head of Strategy. These are published on the Website. • Three priority outcomes have been defined – <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be able to access more good jobs and feel the benefit of economic growth. 2. Be healthier and more independent 3. Feel safer, happier and more supported in and by their community. • The annual Delivery Plan and associated Directorate/Team Plans and MPCs support the delivery of the commissioning priority outcomes outlined in the Strategic Plan. The following approval process is used - Delivery Plan approved by SLT Lead by the Head of Change, Directorate and Team Plans are approved by relevant member of SLT. MPCs are signed off by the relevant manager and are formally 	

<p>demands when determining priorities for the finite resources available.</p>	<p>reviewed twice per annum and a rating allocated together with the line manager.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An integrated performance management approach fully implemented for Q1 18/19. The Senior Leadership Team and Cabinet receive performance monitoring reports at regular intervals based on progress towards delivery of the business plan priority outcomes. 	
	<p>Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital investment is structured to achieve appropriate life spans and adaptability for future use or those resources (e.g. land) are spent on optimising social, economic and environmental wellbeing. This is outlined in the Medium Term Financial Strategy and detailed in the capital programme. • Development of the People Helping People agenda and Digital by Design to help address rising levels of demand for Council services. • The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SSLEP) brings businesses and local authorities together to drive economic growth and create jobs. The County Council is the Accountable Officer for the LEP. • The SSLEP has a single inward investment team ‘Make it Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire’ and an Education Trust, which is working with education providers and businesses to address the skills gap, while Destination Staffordshire is working with tourism businesses to market the county as a place to work and visit. To ensure the best achievement for the area the LEP is working with Government and other organisations to secure funding and improve access to finance for businesses. • Sustainable Procurement incorporates the achievement of environmental, economic and social outcomes throughout procurement processes. The evaluation of Social and Environmental Value is considered as part of the evaluation criteria in all procurements and is designed to assist commissioners and procurers to maximise opportunities to improve the social, economic and environment condition of our local area through effective commissioning and procurement. 	<p>To complete the work that has commenced with Social Enterprise UK to develop a proposal and a draft policy.</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Head of Commercial Services</p> <p>Implementation Date: revised to September 2019.</p>

D -Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

<p>Local government achieves its intended outcomes by providing a mixture of legal, regulatory, and practical interventions. Determining the right mix of these courses of action is a critically important strategic choice that local government has to make to ensure intended outcomes are achieved. They need robust decision-making mechanisms to ensure that their defined outcomes can be achieved in a way that provides the best trade-off between the various types of resource inputs while still enabling effective and efficient operations. Decisions made need to be reviewed continually to ensure that achievement of outcomes is optimised.</p>	<p>Determining interventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The principles of commissioning are applied to ensure clear alignment to need and improving outcomes • Options are clearly defined and analysed to ensure decisions support community and digital solutions. • The system for decision making ensures all relevant information is considered such as analysis of options, resource implications, and outcomes. 	
	<p>Planning interventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Delivery Plan and associated Directorate and Team Plans and MPCs supported as necessary by delivery plans, is the means by which the Council’s strategic priority outcomes are translated into action and delivered. • The Council is committed to involving local people in its most important decisions through community engagement. • It seeks opportunities to get local people involved in the running of services and assets through relevant consultation and our bespoke approach to engaging communities, ‘People Helping People’. • The MTFS is linked to our Delivery Plan to ensure resources are available to deliver priority outcomes. Member Led challenge sessions are held to scrutinise the robustness of the financial proposals. • Strategic Risks associated with partnership and joint working arrangements are identified and recorded in the strategic risk register. • Contract management arrangements are in place to manage delivery of service requirements. • Change control mechanisms are in place to ensure that Contracts/Partnership arrangements continue to deliver the Council’s priority outcomes. • KPIs have been established and approved for each priority area, included in the business plan and reported upon regularly to SLT and Cabinet. [Supported by head of Strategy and Head of Change] 	<p>To ensure ongoing greater visibility and ownership of the Corporate Risk Register, together with regular monitoring and updating of individual risk areas.</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Director of Corporate Services</p> <p>Implementation Date: Ongoing</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SLT monthly and Executive quarterly reports include detailed performance results and highlight areas where corrective action is necessary. 	
	<p>Optimising achievement of intended outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The annual budget is prepared in line with agreed priorities and the MTFS which is approved by Cabinet and Full Council. The council publishes its Financial Strategy annually to set an indicative five year rolling financial plan to fit the longer term strategic vision as well as a detailed one year budget. This process is supported via all members of the wider leadership team, including the use of annual accountability letters. • A key development of the People helping People agenda is that service plans demonstrate consideration of ‘social value’. • All Managers are supported in the delivery of their financial objectives via their Finance Business Partner. 	
<p><i>E - Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it</i></p>		
<p>Local government needs appropriate structures and leadership, as well as people with the right skills, appropriate qualifications and mind-set, to operate efficiently and effectively and achieve their intended outcomes within the specified periods. A local government organisation must ensure that it has both the capacity to fulfil its own mandate and to make certain that there are policies in place to guarantee that its management has the operational capacity for the organisation as a whole.</p>	<p>Developing the entity’s capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular reviews of activities, outputs and planned outcomes including acting upon the outcome and recommendations contained within Inspectorate Reports. • Development of demand management through digital by design, privacy by design, people helping people and commercialisation work streams. • The Council has a Learning & Development strategy including the use of a digital learning management system GO available to the whole workforce covering, statutory and mandatory training, health and safety, ICT, Change Management and key knowledge and soft skills. • Utilisation of research and CIPFA benchmarking exercises where appropriate. • Effective operation of partnerships which deliver agreed outcomes. 	
	<p>Developing the capability of the entity’s leadership and other individuals</p>	<p>To complete the update exercise of the current Schemes of Delegation to</p>

<p>Because both individuals and the environment in which an authority operates will change over time, there will be a continuous need to develop its capacity as well as the skills and experience of the leadership of individual staff members. Leadership in local government entities is strengthened by the participation of people with many different types of backgrounds, reflecting the structure and diversity of communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job descriptions are in place for Officers which have been correctly evaluated using the agreed Job Evaluation criteria and processes. • Role descriptors for Member roles. • Induction arrangements for Officers/Members • A Protocol on Member/Officer Relations to achieve good working relationships in the conduct of council business • Schemes of delegation reviewed regularly in the light of legal and organisational changes. • Procurement and financial regulations, which are reviewed on a regular basis, are in place. • Officers/Members are updated on legal and policy changes as required. • Development and training plans for employees is identified through the annual My Performance Conversation appraisal process. • Access to update courses/ information briefings on new legislation. • Efficient systems and technology used for effective support. • Implementing appropriate human resource policies (including Thinkwell) and ensuring that they are working effectively. • HR policies and procedures developed incorporating relevant guidance on equalities and diversity requirements, safer recruitment, pre-employment checks. • Development of an Apprenticeship Programme offering training, skills and experience in Local Government. • Health and Safety policies designed to protect and enhance the welfare of staff are actively promoted and monitored. • Improving Workforce Wellbeing programme being rolled out across the Council 	<p>ensure that they are fit for purpose in light of revised organisational requirements. Responsible Officer: Director of Corporate Services Implementation Date: December 2019.</p> <p>To complete the review of the MPC which is a year 1 priority in the People Strategy Responsible Officer: Head of HR/OD Implementation Date: 31 March 2020</p> <p>To review the current HR policies in operation to ensure that they reflect the needs of the business. Responsible Officer: Head of HR/OD Implementation Date First tranche to be completed by 31 March 2020.</p>
<p><i>F - Managing risks and performance through robust internal controls and strong public financial management</i></p>		
<p>Local government needs to ensure that the organisations</p>	<p>Managing risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk management strategy/ policy formally approved and adopted by the Audit & Standards Committee. These documents are reviewed 	

<p>and governance structures that it oversees have implemented, and can sustain, an effective performance management system that facilitates effective and efficient delivery of planned services. Risk management and internal control are important and integral parts of a performance management system and crucial to the achievement of outcomes. Risk should be considered and addressed as part of all decision making activities. A strong system of financial management is essential for the implementation of policies and the achievement of intended outcomes, as it will enforce financial discipline, strategic allocation of resources, efficient service delivery, and accountability. It is also essential that a culture and structure for scrutiny is in place as a key part of accountable decision making, policy making and review. A positive working culture that accepts, promotes and encourages constructive challenge is critical to successful scrutiny and successful delivery. Importantly, this culture does not happen automatically, it requires repeated public commitment</p>	<p>and updated on a regular basis by the Corporate Governance Working Group chaired by the Director of Strategy, Governance and Change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strategic risk register is periodically updated, reviewed by the Corporate Governance Working Group prior to being scrutinised by the Audit & Standards Committee. • The County Council has entered into a partnership arrangement with Staffordshire Civil Contingencies Services Unit who provide a comprehensive civil contingencies service including regular updates, briefings and training exercises with Key Partners. • Business Continuity Plans have been prepared. 	<p>To refresh the risk management policy and strategy.</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Head of Audit & Financial Services</p> <p>Implementation Date: July 2019.</p>
	<p>Managing performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key indicators have been identified which support the Council's Strategic and Delivery Plan, Directorate and Team Plans. The strategic leadership team oversee the monitoring and delivery of performance measures in support of the priority outcomes. An integrated performance management approach to SLT and lead cabinet members • Publication of agenda, associated papers and minutes of public meetings on the County Council website. The Forward Plan will contain all matters which the Leader of the Council has reason to believe will be the subject of a Key Decision to be taken by the Cabinet during the forthcoming four month period. It may also include decisions that are not key decisions but are intended to be determined by the Cabinet • The Constitution, through its Overview and Scrutiny rules has opportunities for the Council's four Select Committees to challenge and debate policy and objectives before, during and after decisions are made. The work programme for each committee reflects the delivery of the County Council's and partners main outcome priorities, areas where their involvement could help improve performance and/or priorities and concerns raised by the public 	

<p>from those in authority.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda, minutes of Select Committees and any associated reports with recommendations to the Executive are available via the County Council's website. • Overview and Scrutiny training for members is provided initially at induction, also on an annual basis or on specific subjects within Select Committee meetings. • The County Council has both Procurement and Financial Regulations which set out the council's arrangements and ensure that processes continue to operate effectively and efficiently. 	
	<p>Robust internal control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk management arrangements/ policy have been formally approved and adopted and are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. • An annual report is produced by Internal Audit which provides an opinion on the council's control environment, and a self-assessment of its arrangements against the public sector internal audit standards and CIPFA's guide to the role of the Head of Internal Audit. The Council's Internal Audit service was externally reviewed in January 2018 to ensure adherence to the public sector internal audit standards by CIPFA and was awarded the highest level of compliance i.e. Full Compliance. • Compliance with the Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption (CIPFA 2014). • Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy which is subject to regular review and is approved by the Corporate Governance Working Group. The annual outturn report summaries anti-fraud activity in the year. • Annual governance statement prepared with senior management support and consideration by Audit and Standards Committee. • An effective internal audit service is resourced and maintained. Internal Audit prepares and delivers a risk based audit plan in line with international auditing standards which is kept under review to reflect changing priorities and emerging risks. • Audit and Standards Committee oversees the management of governance issues, internal controls, risk management and financial reporting. It meets approximately four times per year and is adequately supported in respect of its roles/responsibilities. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are frameworks in place in relation to child and adult safeguarding. • A self-evaluation assessment based on the CIPFA best practice criteria has been performed by the Audit & Standards Committee and will be refreshed annually. 	
	<p>Managing data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The following arrangements are in place :- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Designated data protection officer ii. Data protection policies and procedures iii. Acceptable Use Policy iv. Information Sharing Protocol v. Protective Marking Scheme vi. Mandatory training via Go on Privacy/GDPR/Cyber Security vii. Designate Senior Information Risk Owners (SIRO's) who undergo regular refresher training. • The Council's Information Governance Framework provides guidance on the arrangements that must be in place to ensure personal data is kept protected and secure. Using Privacy by Design as per GDPR requirements. • Effective information sharing is undertaken in accordance with the Data Protection Act and the Staffordshire Information Sharing Protocol • Data Subjects are informed why their personal information is being collected and how it will be processed (including when shared with other bodies) through the Council's overall Privacy Notices published on our website and individual Privacy Statements on forms, in booklets etc. • Information Sharing Agreements, are reviewed on a regular basis, are in place to document the sharing of information using national agreements or the template in the Staffordshire Information Sharing Protocol. 	
	<p>Strong public financial management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial management supports the delivery of services and transformational change as well as securing good stewardship through modern and up to date HR & Financial management systems. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Medium Term Financial Strategy is in place which covers a rolling 5 year period. • Financial procedures are documented in the Financial Regulations. • Procurement procedures are documented in the Procurement Regulations. • Delegations from Council are outlined in the Schemes of Delegations. • Regular budget monitoring reports are produced and provided to Accountable Budget Holders who are supported by Finance Business Partners in the management of their delegated budgets. • The financial position is reported quarterly to Cabinet and Corporate Review Select Committee. 	
<i>G - Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability</i>		
<p>Accountability is about ensuring that those making decisions and delivering services are answerable for them. Effective accountability is concerned not only with reporting on actions completed, but also ensuring that stakeholders are able to understand and respond as the organisation plans and carries out its activities in a transparent manner. Both external and internal audit contribute to effective accountability</p>	<p>Implementing good practice in transparency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agendas, reports and minutes are published on the council's website. • Compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015. Required data is published on the County Councils web site. 	
	<p>Implementing good practices in reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Annual Governance Statement sets out the council's governance framework and the results of the effectiveness of the council's arrangements. The AGS includes areas for improvement. • Annual Financial Statements are compiled, published to timetable and included on the council's website. This includes the External Auditors audit opinion on the Council's financial statements and arrangements for securing Value for Money. • The Annual Governance Statement is separately published on the Councils website once it has been approved by the Audit & Standards Committee. 	
	<p>Assurance and effective accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations in the Annual Governance Statement inform positive improvement within the Council's governance arrangements. • Compliance with CIPFA's Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit (2010) 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compliance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards• An effective internal audit service is resourced and maintained. The Service has direct access to members and provides assurance on governance arrangements via an annual report containing an opinion on the council's internal control arrangements.	
--	---	--