



# Annual Governance Statement 2020-2021

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Basildon Borough Council is committed to improving the lives of all residents and creating opportunity and prosperity for local people and businesses. This commitment is set out in the council's Corporate Plan and describes how the council will meet the challenges ahead and make the most of opportunities.

To be successful the council must have a solid foundation of good governance and sound financial management. Basildon's Local Code of Corporate Governance ensures that we are doing the right things, in the right way, in line with our values. The Local Code is supported by an Assurance Framework that sets out how and what the council will seek to obtain assurance on.

A copy of the Council's Local Code and Assurance Framework is available on our website at <http://www.basildon.gov.uk/governance>.

Each year the council is required to produce an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) which describes how its corporate governance arrangements set out in the Local Code have been working. This Statement gives assurances on compliance for the year ending 31 March 2021 and up to the date of approval of the Statement of Accounts.

The Leader of the Council and Chief Executive both recognise the importance of having a solid foundation of good governance and sound financial management. They pledge their commitment to address the matters highlighted in this Statement, and to further enhance our governance arrangements to enable delivery of our Corporate Plan.

The Leader and Chief Executive confirm they have been advised of the implications of the review by Senior Management and the Audit & Risk Committee and are satisfied that the steps outlined in this document will ensure that our governance arrangements remain fit for the future.

Signed on behalf of Basildon Borough Council



**Leader of the Council**

**Date: 08.07.2021**



**Chief Executive**

**Date: 08.07.2021**

# REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COUNCIL'S GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

Throughout the year, the council regularly reviews the effectiveness of its governance framework to streamline and improve our processes to ensure these arrangements remain effective, now and into the future. This is informed by individual service leadership and management, corporate oversight functions (including statutory officers), internal audit, External Auditors, and other review agencies. In reviewing the effectiveness of the council's governance framework, the commitments detailed within Appendix A of the Local Code are assessed.

Similar and proportionate oversight and governance arrangements should also be put in place in respect of services outsourced to external suppliers, trading partnerships, shared service arrangements and arm's length bodies.

The Annual Governance Statement incorporates the continuous review of the effectiveness of our governance arrangements throughout 2020/21. It identifies those areas where we can and will do more to ensure that we have effective governance arrangements that enable the organisation to deliver on its commitment to improving lives of all residents and creating opportunity and prosperity for local people and businesses.

This Statement is an objective appraisal of our governance framework and shows that, we have **adequate<sup>1</sup>arrangements which continue to be regarded as fit for purpose and comply with the council's Local Code of Corporate Governance** and shows that we have met our legal and statutory obligations to our residents. Whilst the Council has good foundations in relation to its governance arrangements, the council recognises that further work is required to embed and strengthen its governance culture to ensure that both Members and Officers understand the value and importance governance plays within local government.

The External Auditor has continued to be positive about our arrangements to secure value for money and has provided an unqualified opinion on the council's Statement of Accounts for 2019/20.

The system of internal control is a significant part of the framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can, therefore, only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness.

The council recognises that there are areas where we wish to enhance our arrangements to ensure that we continue to do the right things, in the right way, in line with our values and to consider significant challenges we face.

The council is currently aware of further issues that could also affect its financial position such as, but not limited to, insurance claims, planning decisions, appeals against housing/homeless decisions, business rates appeals, enforcement and other matters.

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<sup>1</sup> There are areas for improvement, but most key controls are in place and are operating effectively. Adequate assurance can be given that the system, process, or activity should achieve its objectives.

## Covid -19

It is important to recognise that the Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on governance arrangements from March 2020. However, the council has good foundations in place and the 2020/21 governance review has not identified any new significant issues of concern. The following is a summary of the council's pandemic response as it impacted on governance:

During the required lockdown period, the council was able to consider urgent matters and decisions through its urgent decision procedure rules and arrangements. Legislative changes subsequently made provision for remote meetings and the council responded quickly and effectively to this with meetings recommencing immediately following the Government's announcement in May 2020.

The council also set up a Member working group in relation to Covid-19 recovery thus ensuring that Members had the opportunity to be fully involved.

The majority of staff were required to work from home, where possible, this has worked effectively given that there has been no significant disruption to statutory council services. With the easing of Covid related restrictions the time is now right to review remote working, and the council is currently planning a hybrid approach to office use for service delivery for the future.

The elections that were due in May 2020 were postponed until May 2021 in line with government direction.

The council's Financial Regulations provide authorisation levels within which officers and the Chief Executive can act, with financial decisions deemed to have a significant impact on the budget reserved to council. The provision of significant funding by the government at short notice meant that approval was needed to enable the deployment of the monies at a local level. The council has been closely monitoring all aspects of the financial impact of the crisis and has identified the implications for the council's medium-term financial strategy. Financial management processes were flexed to ensure that the relevant information was captured to enable effective planning and control.

In response to Covid-19 and the lockdown, the council implemented its emergency planning procedures in March 2020. This comprised a Strategic Coordination Group chaired by the Chief Executive and made up of the Senior Leadership Team, and a Tactical Group chaired by the Director Corporate Strategy and Governance and other relevant key officers. Each group met to discuss, recommend, and agree operational and service delivery matters including reviewing the council's 'Covid-19 Risk Log' and a 'Stop – Start' register. The former captured the new or emerging risks across the council arising from Covid-19 together with the mitigations in place, with the latter tracking those services and activities that had to be stopped either due to lockdown restrictions or to enable additional resources to support the delivery of critical services. The risks that were initially identified on the Covid-19 Risk Log have since been transferred, and are now being managed, via the council's Risk Registers. The Strategic Coordination Group initially met daily from March which reduced as the council transitioned into recovery and new ways of working.

In addition, the council's Business Continuity team have, and continue to, work closely with the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) to ensure that the emergency response was managed in a way that was

proportionate and ensures that the local system was able to cope with the pandemic. The LRF is a formal legal partnership of key statutory agencies in each area and is working together on the response to Covid-19, as well as focusing on plans to help the residents, businesses, and communities across Basildon to recover from the wider effects of the pandemic.

The council has continued to keep residents and other stakeholders advised of developments and assistance that is available through the website or via social media. This included partnering with community and voluntary sector organisations to set up the Basildon Community Hub. This is a service that supported our most vulnerable residents with food, medication, befriending and general advice and support, and a Business Hub which was established to help support businesses through the Covid-19 outbreak.

The council has responded in an agile and effective way to continue to provide services to the community and help those most in need. Every effort has been made to maintain a business-as-usual approach and to maintain the delivery of key services to residents.

Internal Audit have undertaken a high-level exercise testing the actions and decisions taken as part of the council's response to Covid-19 and checking that they afforded adequate protection for its residents and staff, based on Government guidance and key planning assumptions.

Internal Audit found that timely action was taken by the council when the extent of the Covid-19 pandemic was realised, and the government implemented the first lockdown at the end of March 2020. Effective coordination of activities was implemented at strategic and operational level and with partners and other agencies. It was found that decisions made by both the Strategic and Tactical Coordination Groups were actioned appropriately and effectively and no serious concerns in the approach adopted were highlighted.

### **UK's Exit from the EU**

The council has responded accordingly to any necessary revisions to its governance arrangements and will continue to monitor and assess any forthcoming impacts and changes. At present, no changes are deemed necessary at this time.

### **Compliance with CIPFA Financial Management Code**

CIPFA published the first edition of their 'Financial Management Code' for local authorities in October 2019. CIPFA considers that compliance with this code is mandatory for all local authorities but it is important to note that such compliance is not specifically mandated by statute. CIPFA state that the first year in which it expects authorities to be fully compliant with the code is 2020/21.

The code is essentially a best practice guide to financial management in the local authority sector. It covers the following areas:

- The responsibilities of the chief financial officer and the leadership team (including members)
- Governance and financial management style
- Medium to long term financial management
- The annual budget
- Stakeholder engagement and business plans
- Monitoring financial performance
- External financial reporting

Officers have undertaken an assessment of the extent of compliance with the requirements of the code. In general terms the council's arrangements follow the recommended best practice set out in the code. Six areas for review and possible improvement have been identified. These relate to:

- 1) Application of the CIPFA/SOLACE Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework
- 2) Increased use of sensitivity analysis in the budget setting process
- 3) Review and documentation of option appraisal process (demonstration of value for money)
- 4) Raising the profile and effectiveness of budget monitoring arrangements
- 5) Raising the understanding of the leadership team of key balance sheet items.

These will be reviewed during 2021/22.

### **Subsidiary Companies**

The council has three subsidiary companies (Sempra Homes Ltd, Acorn House Developments (Basildon) Ltd, and Basildon Borough Enterprises Ltd) which have been set up to deliver commercial opportunities for the council, specifically relating to building and providing quality homes for local people. BBE Ltd is a holding company and holds all the shares in the other two companies. All companies have governance arrangements in place and the council has approved and monitors the business plans. Regular update reports are submitted to appropriate Committees.

### **Statutory Assurances**

Whilst a number of assurances have been obtained to support the conclusion that the council's governance arrangements are adequate, it is important that the following specific assurances are considered to support this Statement:

#### 1. Head of Paid Service

The Head of Paid Service is responsible for the overall corporate and operational management of the council. These responsibilities have been considered within the context of this Statement and the Head of Paid Service can confirm that proper arrangements have been put in place for the overall operation and management of the council.

The Head of Paid Service has no significant concerns to report and continues to evolve the senior management structure to better align responsibilities for the delivery of the councils Corporate Plan, which has included the creation of the Director of Corporate Strategy and Governance post. In relation to the Covid pandemic, the council has responded in an agile and effective way to continue to provide statutory services to the community and help those most in need, which demonstrates and reinforces Basildon's good governance and leadership arrangements.

#### 2. Chief Financial, Section 151 Officer

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the development and maintenance of the Councils governance, risk, and control framework, ensuring lawfulness and financial prudence of decision making and the administration of financial affairs, in accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.

These responsibilities have been considered within the context of this Statement and the Chief Finance Officer can confirm that the council's arrangements conform to Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 and that the council complies with the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) in Local Government (2016).

While the council has robust financial management arrangements in place it is important to note that the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) identifies resource shortfalls of £1.7 million in 2022/23, £1.8 million in 2023/24 and £1.9 million in 2024/25. The Council's Corporate Programme outlines plans to manage this deficit through a combination of service efficiencies, process reviews, digital transformation, creating new income streams and delivery of a commercial programme. It should be noted that the medium-term funding for local government and consequently this authority, remains unclear given the ongoing reviews of potential funding mechanisms and the single year financial settlement for 2021/22. In addition the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the council's financial position continues to evolve as we move into the recovery phase. Both these risks mean that significant revisions to the MTFS are likely to be necessary in due course.

### 3. Monitoring Officer

The Monitoring Officer is required to report to the council in any case where it appears that any proposal, decision, or omission by the authority has given rise to or is likely to or would give rise to any contravention of any enactment, rule of law or code of practice or maladministration or injustice in accordance with Sections 5 and 5A of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989; (LGHA 89).

These responsibilities have been considered within the context of this statement and the Monitoring Officer has no significant concerns to report and has had no reason to submit a report in accordance with the above. The Monitoring Officer is satisfied that the Council has robust processes for decision making, however there remains a need to ensure that a broader range of considerations as highlighted in the council's Local Code of Corporate Governance are considered in the development of policies, projects and when making decisions.

The Monitoring Officer commissioned and oversaw a review of arrangements for officer decision making which was undertaken by the Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO). This found that overall good arrangements were in place but identified areas for improvement which have been addressed and this remains an area of focus to further enhance assurance around the council's decision-making arrangements.

The Monitoring Officer also has no significant concerns regarding overall Member conduct and considers that the council has an effective Joint Standards Committee in place.

The Member Code of Conduct was recently reviewed by the Joint Standards Committee and updated, along with all supporting procedures and protocols, to address the areas of best practice identified by the committee on Standards in Public Life in its review of Local Government Ethical Standards and consideration is being given to the new National Model Code of Conduct. Member Code of Conduct has been provided in the last year and there is considered to be good awareness of the requirements of the Code of Conduct. The council has good procedures in place for review of both Members and Officers Register of Interests. There has continued to be a relatively low number of complaints alleging a breach of the Member Code of Conduct during the past year

which have all been dealt with in accordance with the Council's adopted procedures for handling such complaints.

The council quickly and effectively responded to the switch to remote meetings resulting from the coronavirus pandemic and put in place the necessary arrangements and procedure rules to ensure that meetings have taken place as were scheduled. The conduct of remote meetings brought about new issues and challenges, but which were responded to, and overall remote meetings have been effectively conducted in the circumstances. The council has taken the opportunity to enhance its webcasting system to further enhance engagement by members of the public in council and committee meetings and thereby further enhance openness and transparency.

#### 4. Chief Audit Executive

In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and the Public Sector Internal Auditing Standards (PSIAS), the Head of Governance and Assurance, who is the Chief Audit Executive for the council is required to provide independent assurance and opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the councils' risk management and control framework, and through the internal audit service deliver an annual programme of risk based audit activity, including counter fraud and investigation activity and make recommendations for the improvement of the management of risk and control.

The Chief Audit Executive is satisfied that sufficient work has been undertaken during 2020/21 to draw a reasonable conclusion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the council's arrangements. Based on the work performed during 2020/21 and other sources of assurance the Chief Audit Executive is of the opinion that adequate assurance can be taken that the council's risk management, internal control, and governance processes, in operation during the year to 31 March 2021, generally accord with proper practice and are fundamentally sound, although there are opportunities to improve the arrangements to enhance the council's governance framework.

Whilst 2020/21 has been affected by Covid-19, as laid out within this AGS, Covid-19 has not significantly impacted on the council's governance arrangements. The council's Audit Section completed an audit on the council's response to Covid-19 and did not identify any serious concerns. Despite the challenges faced by this crisis, the council has responded in an agile and effective way, which reinforces Basildon's strong governance and leadership arrangements.

The council has in place a detailed improvement and development plans for the areas where we can and will do more to ensure that our arrangements remain fit for purpose. Although significant progress has been made regarding this, there are still a number of areas where agreed actions are yet to be fully addressed or where the council has decided to adopt a different approach to address the issue.

Full details of the assurance provided in this Statement can be found within the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2020/21, submitted to the Audit and Risk Committee on the 30 June 2021.

Under the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 and the PSIAS, the council is required to undertake a review of the effectiveness of its Internal Audit function and to report the results in the Annual Governance Statement. As in previous years, it is considered that the council has effective arrangements in place for the provision of the Internal Audit Service.

## RATIONALE FOR 'ADEQUATE ASSURANCE' OPINION

Definition	Description
<p>Adequate</p> 	<p>There are sound policies and processes in place, which are working effectively across services that provide for good governance arrangements and support compliance with requirements of this Principle and the achievement of the councils' aims and objectives. There may be minor areas for continuous improvement, but these do not represent a significant or material risk to the council's overall governance framework.</p>
<p>Some development or areas for improvement</p> 	<p>Whilst there are policies and processes in place, there are some areas which remain a challenge for the council or require further improvement, which may impact the effectiveness of elements of the council's Governance Arrangements, compliance with this principle and achievement of the council's aims and objectives. The council has in place an action plan to address challenges and improvement matters.</p>
<p>Key development or many areas for improvement</p> 	<p>The council has significant challenges in relation to the policies and processes which may impact the effectiveness of elements of the council's Governance Arrangements, compliance with this principle and achievement of the council's aims and objectives. We have implemented plans for corrective actions to manage these risks.</p>

## What's working well and how can we improve

Core Principles of the Framework	Overall Assessment	Strengths		Challenges
<p><b>Principle A:</b> Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal framework (constitution, policy &amp; procedures) that effectively sets out the rules and procedures to be followed by members and officers, including Gifts and Hospitality and Declarations of Interests.</li> <li>• The council ensures that its values are embedded within council policies and procedures and that there is an expectation that those who work with the council will respect these.</li> <li>• The council maintains a policy framework to ensure effective delivery of the council's objectives</li> <li>• Effective ethical framework built on the Seven Principles of Public Life that set out the standards of behaviour, conduct and values the council expects of its members, officers and those who work with the council.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roles and responsibilities are set out for delivering council services and holding the council to account. There are defined roles throughout the organisation, with a clear structure from Chief Executive down, including the Senior Leadership Team and Managers Group. The council recognises that further work is required to embed and strengthen its governance culture to ensure that both Members and Officers understand the value and importance governance plays within local government.</li> <li>• The council is completing a review of its procurement arrangements. Further work is being done to ensure it is embedded across the council to demonstrate good practice, compliance with legislation,</li> </ul>	

What's working well and how can we improve

Core Principles of the Framework	Overall Assessment	Strengths		Challenges
<p><b>Principle B:</b> Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective whistleblowing policies and procedures</li> <li>• Detailed constitution covering the powers of committees, members and senior officers, statutory officers, and decision-making processes.</li> <li>• Company structures and governance arrangements are in place for council wholly owned companies.</li> <li>• The council has effective processes in place for officer decision making.</li> <li>• The council has a Consultation and Engagement Policy in place and adequately consults with its residents and stakeholders.</li> <li>• Effectively recognises and values the diversity of our communities and workforce, supported by an Inclusion and Diversity Policy and Strategy.</li> </ul>	<p>realise social value, value for money and public accountability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members and officers receive training. The council is reviewing its approach to assist them in effectively executing their duties.</li> <li>• The council is reviewing its complaint handling procedures and processes</li> <li>• To continue to develop the council's approach to strategic partnership working and the respective governance arrangements to deliver the Corporate Plan.</li> </ul>	

What's working well and how can we improve

Core Principles of the Framework	Overall Assessment	Strengths		Challenges
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Webcasting of meetings and effectively recording decisions made through Committees and publish those appropriately.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Principle C.</b> Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefit</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The council does not currently have an up-to-date Local Plan. Examination in Public of the new plan is due early summer 2021, with anticipated adoption by spring 2022.</li> <li>The council is continuing to review its approach to performance management enabling a clear link to outcomes and refocusing the importance of performance management across the organisation.</li> </ul>	

## What's working well and how can we improve

Core Principles of the Framework	Overall Assessment	Strengths			Challenges
<p><b>Principle D.</b> Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An approved Corporate Plan setting the priorities, values, and strategic direction of the council.</li> <li>• The council maintains a policy framework to ensure effective delivery of the council's objectives.</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Principle E.</b> Developing the entity's capacity including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The council has systems and technology to support delivery of services and support members and officers in performing their role.</li> <li>• The council has an approved Workforce Strategy that ensures that the council recruits and retains staff, develops skills, and ensures those skills are deployed effectively to improve resilience across the organisation</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roles and responsibilities are set out for delivering council services and holding the council to account. There are defined roles throughout the organisation, with a clear structure from Chief Executive down, including the Senior Leadership Team and Managers Group. The council recognises that further work is required to embed and strengthen its governance culture to ensure that both Members and Officers understand the value and importance governance plays within local government.</li> </ul>

What's working well and how can we improve

Core Principles of the Framework	Overall Assessment	Strengths		Challenges
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The council need to review the approach to individual performance management to ensure consistency in holding staff to account for their performance and behaviour.</li> <li>• The council has an Asset Management framework and a positive direction of travel in terms of embedding the principles in the organisation. Further work is required to ensure that all of the council's assets are compliant, sustainable, fit for purpose and support the delivery of the council's strategic objectives.</li> <li>• The council has an approved Organisational Strategy which aims to describe a vision of Basildon 5 years into the future. This is a set of principles that need to be embedded through the organisation in order to ensure the organisation is fit for the future to deliver our ambitions.</li> </ul>	

## What's working well and how can we improve

Core Principles of the Framework	Overall Assessment	Strengths		Challenges
<p><b>Principle F.</b></p> <p>Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective system of internal audit delivered in line with the Public Sector Internal Auditing Standards.</li> <li>• Effective business continuity/emergency planning processes in place to continue to provide services and respond to an emergency or event</li> <li>• The council has effective Risk Management arrangements in place which is working well across the organisation.</li> <li>• Effective counter fraud and corruption arrangements and whistleblowing policies and procedures.</li> <li>• Effective health and safety management framework which seeks to ensure compliance with the law.</li> <li>• Actively promotes safeguarding to prevent harm and reduce the risk of abuse or neglect.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The council has undertaken a significant amount of work to develop the building blocks for effective information governance. Further work is to be undertaken to embed these across the council and reduce the level of minor data breaches</li> <li>• A significant amount of work has been undertaken to define the council's approach to project and programme management and develop these arrangements. There is still, however, work to do to ensure project management is properly embedded throughout the council.</li> <li>• The council is continuing to review its approach to performance management enabling a clear link to outcomes and refocusing the importance of performance management across the organisation.</li> </ul>	

What's working well and how can we improve

Core Principles of the Framework	Overall Assessment	Strengths		Challenges
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The council has robust financial management arrangements in place however, it is important to note that the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) identifies resource shortfalls. The council's Corporate Programme outlines plans to manage this deficit through a combination of service efficiencies, process reviews, digital transformation, creating new income streams and delivery of a commercial programme</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Principle G.</b> Implementing good practices in transparency reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effective Audit &amp; Risk Committee that provides a source of assurance and complies with guidance.</li> <li>The council demonstrates its commitment to openness by producing an annual report covering the performance of the council, value for money and stewardship of resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The council is continuing to review its approach to performance management enabling a clear link to outcomes and refocusing the importance of performance management across the organisation.</li> <li>The council has robust financial management arrangements in place however, it is important to note that the</li> </ul>	

## What's working well and how can we improve

Core Principles of the Framework	Overall Assessment	Strengths		Challenges
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective arrangements in place to produce the Annual Governance Statement, with Local Code of Corporate Governance and Combined Assurance Framework reviewed and updated annually.</li> <li>• The council's shared service arrangements are appropriately governed to ensure accountability in terms of achieving outcomes and managing risks</li> <li>• The council's webcasting of meetings attracts good numbers of viewers and increases public scrutiny.</li> <li>• Clear audit opinion on the council's financial statements</li> </ul>	<p>council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) identifies resource shortfalls. The council's Corporate Programme outlines plans to manage this deficit through a combination of service efficiencies, process reviews, digital transformation, creating new income streams and delivery of a commercial programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The council needs to review and update its Publication Scheme to provide transparency in access to information</li> </ul>	

## PROGRESS ON ADDRESSING GOVERNANCE IMPROVEMENT AREAS FROM 2019/20

What we said we would do	Progress
<p><b>Partnership Arrangements</b> To assist in delivering its outcomes the council needs to review the effectiveness of partnership working and the associated Governance arrangements to support these.</p>	<p>Plans to undertake a strategic partnership review were not taken forward. We will instead use the forthcoming Corporate Plan development process to identify where partnership arrangements are needed to help the Council deliver its corporate ambitions and then develop them as necessary. A partnership database has been developed and the data held therein will be subject to regular review and refresh. The partnership framework, including governance and risk management aspects, will be refreshed in the first half of 2021/22. As such, this area remains an action for 2021/22.</p>
<p><b>Information Governance</b> To embed Information Governance arrangements to underpin the council's recently approved information management policy.</p>	<p>The council is continuing to make significant progress in development of corporate information management arrangements. Central to this has been the development of an information architecture setting out the operational framework and procedures associated with effective information management which will provide the basis for development of a central records library. The roll out of the new user devices and improvements to the ICT Security Infrastructure will enable greater staff participation in realisation of the Corporate Information Architecture in SharePoint, and the data cleansing exercises can now be accelerated in preparation for SharePoint adoption. The development of SharePoint Hubs, Sites &amp; Libraries continues to gather momentum, as more staff receive new end user devices, and contributes significantly to the council's overall Digital ambitions and strategy. Alongside, these specific developments, work continues to develop other areas, particularly in connection with data protection, including planning rollout of refresher training, data protection impact assessments, data audits etc. As such, this area remains a key action for 2021/22.</p>
<p><b>Programme and Project Management</b> To define and maintain standards for project management the council needs to develop its project management methodology in order to strengthen accountability and decision-making to ensure the Corporate Plan and service objectives are met.</p>	<p>The Council has developed a framework, templates, and guidance to be used to govern significant projects. Executive team gateway sessions have taken place for all activities within the Corporate programme. Project/programme briefs have been considered providing the detail around each of the individual activities and delivery plans that are in development. Highlight reporting to a range of delivery groups takes place to provide progress and a RAG status in respect of project scope, risk, issues, costs, and time.</p> <p>Working with Senior Leadership team and Lead Officers/Project Managers, the PMO continues to provide challenge to the quality, sequencing, resourcing and risk mitigations alongside key decision and engagement points to support delivery. The PMO has established with the Organisational Development and Change Manager, a programme of project management training for the Council. A preferred supplier has been identified and the course content is almost complete. This is an APM</p>

accredited 2 day course using the Basildon framework and gateways. 60 participants have signed up to the training which will be held over 5 courses commencing in mid-June 2021 and running until October 2021.  
 During 2021/2022 the PMO will work with services to improve project management skills in the Council and embed the framework across all projects. As such, this area remains a key action for 2021/22.

## ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS THE AMBER GOVERNANCE AREAS IDENTIFIED ABOVE AS PART OF THE 2020/21 ANNUAL REVIEW

Governance Area	Activity Description	Target Due Date	Responsible Officer
Roles and Responsibilities	Whilst the Council has strong foundations in relation to its governance arrangements, the council recognises that continuous work is required to embed and strengthen its governance culture to ensure that both Members and Officers understand the value and importance governance plays within local government and ensure effective Member and Officer Relations.	31 March 2022	Chief Executive, Director of Resources Director of Strategy and Governance
	To review the Role of the Manager to clarify what is expected and to identify what tools are needed to help them perform their role.	31 December 2021	Director of People and Change
Member & Officer Induction, Training & Development	To review and develop the Member Development Programme to ensure it assists Members in effectively executing their role and duties.	31 December 2021	Director of Strategy and Governance
	To review the Corporate Induction and learning and development offer including “must do” training identified for each learning group	30 September 2021	Director of People and Change
Performance Management	To review and refresh the council’s performance management framework to ensure that effective arrangements are embedded across the council. Effective performance management will enable us challenge contract underperformance, monitor delivery of	30 September 2021	Director of Strategy and Governance

Governance Area	Activity Description	Target Due Date	Responsible Officer
	the corporate programme and service plans, improve decision making and allow us to report our performance publicly.		
Individual Performance Management Arrangements	To complete a review of the effectiveness of the new individual performance management arrangements that was introduced in 2019 to ensure that objectives have been set and are regularly reviewed to ensure consistency in holding staff to account for their performance and behaviour.	30 September 2021	Director of People and Change
Access to Information	The council's will review and update its Publication Scheme to provide transparency through access to information	31 December 2021	Director of People and Change
Partnership Working	To identify where partnership arrangements are needed to help the Council deliver its corporate ambitions and develop them as necessary  To develop a new partnership framework to support formation and operation where partnership arrangements are considered necessary to help the Council deliver its corporate ambitions.	30 September 2021	Director of Strategy and Governance
Asset Management	To complete a programme of reviews on all council assets to ensure they are compliant, sustainable, fit for purpose and support the delivery of Council services and strategic objectives	31 March 2022	Director of Housing and Property
Development Plan	Respond and address the issues raised by the Planning Inspectorate and the outcome of the examination in public.	1 July 2022	Director of Growth
Programme and Project Management Methodology	To continue to develop and enhance the council's project management culture, methodologies, skills and arrangements to ensure the project objectives are effectively met	30 October 2021	Director of Strategy and Governance
Comments, Compliments and Complaints	To review the procedures and processes for complaint handling to improve the control framework	30 June 2021	Director of Resources
Procurement	To ensure that effective Procurement arrangements are embedded to enable the Council to demonstrate good practice, compliance with legislation, realise value for money and public accountability	31 March 2022	Director of Resources