

## CIPFA/SOLACE Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework

### Flintshire County Council – Code of Corporate Governance 2017

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The Council is the Administering Authority for the Clwyd Pension Fund (the Pension Fund). The governance arrangements detailed in this Annual Governance Statement apply equally to the Council's responsibilities to the Pension Fund.

There are further specific requirements for the Pension Fund which are:

- The Statement of Investment Principles;
- Funding Strategy Statement;
- A full Actuarial Valuation to be carried out every third year.

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

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

**Behaving with integrity**

1. Ensuring members and employees behave with integrity and lead a culture where acting in the public interest is visibly and consistently demonstrated thereby protecting the reputation of the Organisation.
2. Ensuring members take the lead in establishing specific values for the organisation and its employees and that they are communicated and understood. These should build on the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles)
3. Leading by example and using these standard operating principles or values as a framework for decision making and other actions.
4. Demonstrating, communicating and embedding the standard operating principles or values through appropriate policies/processes such as which are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are operating effectively.

- The Council's Constitution contains the general principles for the Council's governance arrangements and the Monitoring Officer monitors and reviews its operation to ensure that the aims and principles are given full effect and kept relevant. Sections 19-23 of the Constitution have the Codes of Conduct and Protocols which Members and Officers (employees) have agreed to comply with. The Council requires members, whether they are elected or co-opted, to sign and to be bound by our Code of Conduct. Collectively, these codes and protocols reflect the Nolan Principles and translate them into behaviours that support the principles. This information can be found in the [Constitution](#):
  - *Code of Conduct for Members* (1,2,3,& 4)
  - *The Flintshire Standard which contains a Local Resolution Procedure for complaints about member behaviour* (1,2,3 & 4)
  - *Protocol for members in their dealings with contractors, developers and other third parties.* (1,3 & 4)
  - *Protocol on Member/ Officer relations* (1,2,3 & 4)
  - *Officers' Code of Conduct* (1,3 & 4)
- The Council operates an effective elections protocol, ensuring high standards are upheld during election periods. (1)
- Employees are also bound by a policy of 'politically restricted posts'. This policy ensures that all qualifying employees comply with any statutory restrictions on their political activities. (1)
- The Council has an appraisal system for employees which is based on the Council's [Behavioural Competency Framework](#) (3) and links to the Council's objectives set out in the [Council Plan](#). There are also [Diversity and Equality](#) and [Dignity at Work](#) policies. (1,2,3 & 4)
- The Council has an [Anti-fraud and Corruption Strategy](#), [Fraud Response Plan](#) and a [Whistleblowing Policy](#) which are reviewed and updated

periodically. (1,2, 3, & 4)

### Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values

5. Seeking to establish, monitor and maintain the organisation's ethical standards and performance
6. Underpinning personal behaviour with ethical values and ensuring they permeate all aspects of the organisation's operation
7. Developing and maintaining robust policies and procedures which place emphasis on agreed ethical values
8. Ensuring the external providers of services on behalf of the organisation are required to act with integrity and in compliance with high ethical standards expected by the organisation

- The Council's reputation and standing are important, and the Council's commitment to the rule of law and ethical values is expressed in: 'Gorau Tarian Cyfiawnder' (The Best Shield is Justice) which is the motto on the Council's coat of arms. The Council observes the seven principles of public life (Nolan principles) which are selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership [Striking the Balance - Upholding the Seven Principles of Public Life in Regulation](#)
- The Council's commitment to these principles is shown in the codes and policies below which is found in the [Constitution](#):
  - *Code of Conduct for Members* (5,6)
  - *The Flintshire Standard* which contains a *Local Resolution Procedure for complaints about member behaviour* (5,6)
  - *Protocol for members in their dealings with contractors, developers and other third parties.* (5,6)
  - *Protocol on Member/ Officer relations* (5,6)
  - *Officers' Code of Conduct* (5,6)
- The Constitution contains comprehensive Contract and Financial Procedure Rules governing the procurement process to be adopted in conducting the Council's business, they are available on the website. [The Contract Procedure Rules](#) were reviewed in 2016 and [Financial Procedure Rules](#) (FPRs) are reviewed every two years. The latest review of FPRs was undertaken in November 2017.(7)
- The Council's [Procurement Strategy](#) enables the delivery of cost effective goods and services and ensures that the contribution of the Council's procurement activity on the local economy, especially social enterprise is improved. (7)
- The Contract Procedure Rules ensure that obligations under the [Wellbeing of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) as well as the Public Sector Equality Duty under the [Equality Act 2010](#) are complied with. (8)
- The Council has adopted a set of Community Benefits ([link required](#)) to underpin procurement, grants and community-related activity. (8)

### Respecting the rule of law

9. Ensuring members and employees demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of the law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations.
10. 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.
11. Striving to optimise the use the Council's full powers available for the benefit of its citizens, its communities and other stakeholders.
12. Dealing with breaches of legal and regulatory provisions effectively.
13. Ensuring corruption and misuse of power are dealt with effectively.

- The Council's Chief Officer (Governance) is the Monitoring Officer and Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO) (9,10,11,12,13)
- The Internal Audit function within the Governance Portfolio reports regularly to the Audit Committee. Membership of the Audit committee includes an independent lay member. (9,11,12,13)
- The Council has a Standards Committee comprising nine members, five of whom are independent of the Council, three are county councillors and the other represents community councils. The committee promotes and maintains high standards of conduct by councillors and co-opted members. (9,10,11,12,13)
- The Council's relationship with the Wales Audit Office and other regulatory bodies remains strong. (11)
- The Council has a robust Overview & Scrutiny function which consists of six committees which each have 15 elected members and dedicated officer support. (9,10,11) The committees are:
  - Community & Enterprise;
  - Corporate Resources;
  - Education & Youth, which has five statutory co-opted members;
  - Environment;
  - Organisational Change; and
  - Social & Healthcare
- If the Council fail to address or resolve customer complaints to the complainant's satisfaction, they have recourse to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, whose contact details are published on the Council's website. (9,10,12,13)
- The Council is answerable to other regulatory/statutory bodies, examples include Information Commissioner's Office and the Equality and Human Rights Commission, plus the four Welsh Commissioners for Welsh Language, Future Generations, Children and Older People. (9, 11,12)

- In addition to its open culture, the Council has a clear Whistleblowing Policy for those who wish to report malpractice. This policy is also promoted to contractors with the council.

**A. Core principle: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement**

**Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement**

**Openness**

14. Ensuring an open culture through demonstrating, documenting and communicating the organisation's commitment to openness.
15. 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 decisions confidential should be provided.
16. Provide 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.
17. Using formal and informal consultation and engagement to determine the most appropriate and effective interventions / courses of action.

- The Council uses the website, its intranet and its partner and partnership networks to continually demonstrate its commitment to openness. (14)
- Most reports are considered in public and in the cases where this is not the case, the Committee has resolved to exclude the press and public after the Monitoring Officer or Deputy Monitoring Officer have decided there is a proper legal basis for doing so. The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees produce an [annual report](#) on their work which is considered by the Council. The committee agenda & minutes held on the Council's website provides a record of the Council decision making and supporting information. Audit committee receive a report all open actions within Portfolios which is a public document. (15)
- The report author provides a summary of the main features of the report, which identifies how the recommendations have been arrived at. The executive summary assists in terms of presenting the report. Meetings of the full Council and the Planning Committee are now web-cast and minutes of other meetings are drafted to provide the reader with the 'sense' of the meeting, leading to the decisions made which are reflected in the resolutions recorded. All committee papers, excluding part two items, are available within the public domain. (16)
- Consultation and engagement with customers and communities takes place on a number of different levels: representative democracy through elected members, structured engagement through for example the County Forum meetings (with Town and Community Councils), formal needs assessments through strategic partnerships, surveys and feedback mechanisms such as workshops and roadshows. The methods used are selected according to requirements, audience and coverage. The feedback received helps to shape and develop how the Council does things and assists decision makers in understanding the impacts on communities. (17)
- The Council has [Core Principles for Public Engagement and Consultation](#), a [Compliments, Concerns and Complaints](#) feedback arrangement and a [Customer Services Strategy](#) (17)

- The Council’s consultation and engagement practices are varied in both scale and method depending upon the nature of the subject area. They can range from a voluntary household survey on a variety of council issues to a detailed statutory engagement process such as those undertaken for school reviews and social service changes. (17)

### **Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders**

18. Effectively engaging with stakeholders to ensure that the purpose, objective and intended outcomes for each stakeholder relationship are clear so that outcomes are achieved successfully and sustainably.
19. Developing formal and informal partnerships to allow for resources to be used more effectively and outcomes achieved more effectively.
20. Ensuring that partnerships are based on trust, a shared commitments to change, a culture that promotes and accepts challenge among partners; and that the added value of partnership working is explicit.

- The Council has channels of communication with all sections of the community and other stakeholders and puts in place proper monitoring arrangements to ensure they operate effectively (18)  
The Council has many ways of communicating with its citizens and stakeholders, including: -
  - The e-magazine ‘Your Council’
  - Website
  - Social Media
  - Publications and leaflets
  - Events
  - Established links and regular meetings with local interest groups/forums
  - Invitations to members of the public to submit issues they consider should be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committees
  - Consultation on the budget process with local stakeholders (residents and businesses) to help shape its budget proposals and encourage community involvement.
- The Council has formal and informal collaborative arrangements with other institutional stakeholders to allow for resources to be used more effectively and outcomes achieved more effectively. The statutorily based [Public Services Board](#) is one of many collaboration partnerships across agencies; other collaborations revolve around regional services e.g. education (GwE) and Social Services Commissioning Hub. Other strategic partnerships include the Voluntary Sector Compact, People are Safe Board, Youth Justice Executive Board, Health, Wellbeing and Independence Board, the Part 9 Board, Regional Safeguarding Board and the North Wales Economic Ambition Board. The Council also holds quarterly meetings with the Town and Community Councils as the County Forum for common issues to be discussed and to raise awareness of council developments. (19)
- The Public Services Board has undertaken a well-being assessment of the Flintshire communities. This has informed a draft Well-being Plan which, once adopted in May 2018 will be the Plan which is being used by partners across the County to develop priorities and projects to

improve well-being.(19)

- Whenever a new partnership is created, care is taken to ensure that its legal status is clear, that it has appropriate terms of reference and that representatives are aware of the extent to which they can bind the Council. The Cabinet has set and agreed a protocol for the governance of partnership working including the full involvement of appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Audit Committee. [Partnership self-assessments](#) include assessing the behaviour, performance, value for money and procedures of partnership arrangements. (20)

### **Engaging stakeholders effectively, including individual citizens and service users**

21. Establishing a clear policy on the type of issues that the organisation will meaningfully consult with or involve individual citizens, service users and other stakeholders to ensure that service (or other) provision is contributing towards the achievement of intended outcomes.
22. Ensuring communication methods are effective and that members and employees are clear about their roles with regard to community engagement.
23. Encouraging, collecting and evaluating the views and experiences of citizens, service users and organisations of different backgrounds including reference to future needs.
24. Implementing effective feedback mechanisms in order to demonstrate how their views have been taken into account.
25. Balancing feedback from more active stakeholder groups with other stakeholder groups to ensure inclusivity.
26. Taking account of the interests of future generations of tax payers and services users.

- The Council has a consultation and engagement framework and guidelines/policy document plus adoption of a set of core consultation and engagement principles based on nationally identified best practice. (21,23,24)
- Communication methods are continually being reviewed to adapt to changing technologies and their impact. Members and employees have clear roles of accountability; members through their representative democracy and employees through more structured assessments, surveys and other ongoing impact and evidence gathering conversations such as those in Social Services. (22)
- The Council takes into account the impact and consequences of decisions on all members of the community through integrated assessment planning; especially with regard to budget planning and alternative delivery models. (25)
- The Council makes prudent judgements about the use of resources in line with the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. (26)



## B. Core principle: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

### Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

#### Defining outcomes

27. Having a clear vision, which is an agreed formal statement of the organisation's purpose and intended outcomes containing appropriate performance indicators, which provides the basis for the organisation's overall strategy, planning and other decisions.
28. Specifying the intended impact on, or changes for, stakeholders including individual citizens and service users. It could be immediately or over the course of a year or longer.
29. Delivering defined outcomes on a sustainable basis within the resources that will be available.
30. Identifying and managing risks to the achievement of outcomes.
31. Managing expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available.

- The County Council's [Council Plan 2017-23](#) is available on the Council's website. The Council Plan has been reset to reflect the new administrative period. (27, 28)
- The Council sets a number of priorities for itself as an individual partner. Priorities for the 2017/18 Council Plan are: Supportive Council, Ambitious Council, Learning Council, Green Council, Connected Council and Serving Council. Each priority has a statement of outcome, achievement targets (both as performance measures and milestones) and rationale for the selected priority. All priorities are reviewed annually in terms of impact of particular changes. (27, 28)
- The Council has a resilient approach to Business Planning for sustainable services including efficiency planning to meet reductions in national funding and increases in local demands and pressures. The Council's [Medium Term Financial Strategy](#) – summary 2016/17 describes the Council's approach to maintaining valued services within the financial constraints. (29)
- The Council's [Medium Term Financial Strategy](#) and [Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan 2016 – 2020](#) outline the resources that are available to deliver outcomes. (29)
- Additionally the Council has set a series of 'Resilience Statements' for each portfolio which provides a measured assessment of the resilience of each service area. (29, 31)
- Risk management is integral to the Council's delivery of objectives, statutory duties, project and change programmes and partnership delivery. It is considered during development and monitoring of all the Council's priorities, projects and Portfolio Business Plans. Strategic risks within the Council Plan are monitored quarterly and reported to Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Audit Committee receives a half

yearly report on these risks. Programme Boards monitor all Business Plan risks. ([Risk Management Policy and Strategy](#)) (30)

- The Council's Portfolio Business Plan Programme measures efficiencies, reviews impact (acceptability and deliverability) with more in-depth impact assessments being undertaken where appropriate. (31)
- In addition the Council is supported by a number of corporate strategies which provide a clear framework for the management of Council resources and support council change and transition. These strategies are: the [Medium Term Financial Strategy](#), the [Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan](#), the [Digital Strategy](#), the [Customer Services Strategy](#) and [People Strategy](#). (31)

### **Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits**

32. Considering and balancing the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies, plans and decisions when taking decisions about service provision.
33. Taking a longer-term view with regard to decision making, taking account of risk and acting transparently whether there are potential conflicts between the Council's intended outcomes and short-term factors such as the political cycle or financial constraints.
34. 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.
35. Ensuring fair access to services.

- The Council is working towards the Well-being of Future Generations (WBFG) principles of sustainability which include economic, social, environmental and cultural impacts within all of its objectives and obligations. (32,33)
- The Council's budget setting policy and approach is one which seeks to protect and sustain for the longer term valuable public services.(32,33)
- The Council has an updated, standard report format and supporting guidance. Report authors are expected to identify any risks, impacts and mitigations within a section of the report "Key Risks and Mitigation". This must include a paragraph in the main body of the report to confirm that an Equality and Welsh Language Impact Assessment (EWLIA) to comply with the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duties and Welsh Language Standards has been carried out. If an EWLIA has not been completed, authors are required to state the reasons why one was not needed. (32)
- Reports must also consider any implications under the [Wellbeing of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#). This places a sustainable development and wellbeing duty on public bodies, together with the need to measure performance towards those wellbeing goals and objectives. (32,33 and 34)
- The annual Capital programme is linked to the [Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan 2016 – 2020](#) and is available on the website. (32,33)

- The Strategy is in three parts, Statutory/Regulatory, Retained Assets and Investments. The Investment section is for new schemes arising from Portfolio Business Plans and the Council Plan based on sound business cases. (32)
- Equality and Welsh Language Impact Assessments are undertaken as part of a wider Integrated Impact Assessment process and published in relation to policy and business decisions as well as setting the budget. These have been reviewed to integrate all requirements of the WBFG (34,35)

## C. Core principle: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievements of the intended outcomes

### Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

#### Determining interventions

36. Ensuring decision makers receive objective and rigorous analysis of a variety of options indicating how intended outcomes would be achieved and including the risks associated with those options. Therefore ensuring best value is achieved however services are provided.
37. 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 available including people, skills, land and assets and bearing in mind future impacts.

- Discussions between Members and employees on the information needs of members to support decision making can take place in a number of ways: formally at a committee meeting, Task & Finish group or workshop, or informally at a briefing. (36) Examples can be found within the [Committee System](#)- particularly when considering Business Plan efficiency proposals and quarterly performance reports.
- During discussions at committees, additional information can be requested. This is with agreement of the timescales: (36) examples can be found in [committee minutes](#).
- Report authors are required to indicate what consultation was required, undertaken and the results. Section B provides further details. Report guidance is within the template and the report guidance. (37) [Guidance Notes](#).

#### Planning interventions

38. Establishing and implementing robust planning and control cycles that cover strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets.
  39. Engaging with internal and external stakeholders in determining how services and other interventions can best be delivered.
  40. Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively including shared risks.
  41. Ensuring arrangements are flexible/agile so that the mechanisms for delivering outputs can be adapted to changing circumstances.
  42. Establishing appropriate local performance indicators (as well as statutory or other national performance indicators) as part of the planning process in order to assess how the performance of services is to be measured.
  43. Ensuring capacity exists to generate the information required to review service quality regularly.
  44. Preparing budgets in accordance with organisational objectives, strategies and the medium term financial strategy.
  45. Informing medium and long term resources planning by drawing up realistic estimates of revenue and capital expenditure aimed at developing a sustainable funding strategy.
- The Council's Schedule of Meetings for the ensuing municipal year is considered at the Annual Meeting of Council which is held each May.

The Forward Work Programme for Council, Cabinet and Committees is considered at each meeting of the Cabinet. Each of the six Overview & Scrutiny committees reconsiders its forward work programme at each ordinary meeting. This ensures that it stays relevant to committee needs. (38,39)

- Business planning and objective planning and monitoring are contained within quarterly and Council Plan reporting. (38)
- An integral part of business planning is understanding and taking action against risks related to the business. The Council's risk management processes are embedded and include, operational, project, strategic, and collaborative partnerships risks. A corporate risk management model as described in the Risk Management Strategy and Policy supports these arrangements. The Council's strategic risks are included within the Council Plan which is embedded within the portfolio business planning processes. This is supplemented by external review and inspection. (38)
- The Council's consultation and [engagement framework and guidelines/policy document policy](#) provides guidance regarding internal and external stakeholder involvement. In addition co-production is being used as a methodology (especially in Social Services) to involve users in the commissioning of services. (39)
- The Council has a range of partnerships working at different levels. [Risk management](#) is an important and essential consideration for all partnerships that the Council lead on. This can be demonstrated by the partnership self-assessment that the Strategic Partnerships undertake on a bi-annual basis to determine risks/challenges for each of the partners and the partnership itself. (40)
- Reviews of shared risks are undertaken at the various partnership boards. (40)
- A regular reviews of plans is undertaken at strategic levels during quarterly monitoring. The Council's Programme Boards also review efficiency plans on a monthly basis. (41)
- In setting direction and prioritising resources the Council sets performance targets against each priority and monitors them through the use of National Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) set by the Welsh Government and the local government family, and local indicators set by the Council. Performance indicators are the 'success measures' for the Council and viewed publicly by Government, regulators and the public. (42)
- The CAMMS system (performance, risk and project management system) assists with the capacity requirements both at portfolio level and corporately to review service quality. The Council also engages with a range of benchmarking groups such as the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE), CLAW etc. to review service quality and productivity. (42)
- Reports include detailed performance results and highlight areas where corrective action is necessary (43)
- Budgets are prepared in accordance with organisational objectives, strategies and the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) (44)

- The [MTFS](#) and annual budget setting process aims to ensure that planning decisions are informed by realistic estimates of expenditure and revenue (45)

### Optimising achievement of intended outcomes

46. Ensuring the medium term financial strategy integrates and balances off service priorities, affordability and other resource constraints.
47. Ensuring the budgeting process is all-inclusive, taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term.
48. 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 optimising resource usage.
49. Ensuring the achievement of 'social value' or 'community benefits' through service planning and commissioning. The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 states that this is "the additional benefit to the community... over and above the direct purchasing of goods, services and outcomes"

- [The Medium Term Financial Strategy](#) (MTFS) and annual budget setting process integrates priorities with resource constraints. The MTFS is in two parts. The first forecasts the resources the Council is likely to have over the next three years. The second part [Meeting the Financial Challenge](#) sets out plans and solutions for managing with reducing resources over this three year period. (46,47)
- The annual budgeting process and Portfolio business plans take into account the medium and long term priorities from the MTFS aligned with the resources made available to the Council. (46,47,48)
- [The Procurement Strategy](#) and [Contract Procedure Rules](#) ensure that adequate emphasis is placed on 'community benefit'. (49)
- The Council has adopted a set of Community Benefits ([link required](#)) to underpin procurement, grants and community-related activity. (49)

## D. Core principle: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

### Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

#### Developing the entity's capacity

50. Reviewing operations, performance and, use of assets on a regular basis to ensure their continuing effectiveness.
  51. Improving resource use through appropriate application of techniques such as benchmarking and other options in order to determine how the Council's resources are allocated so that outcomes are achieved effectively and efficiently.
  52. Recognising the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved.
  53. Developing and maintaining an effective workforce plan to enhance strategic allocation of resources.
- 
- The Annual Performance Report provides detailed information of the Council's plans and their desired impacts. (50,51)
  - The Annual Performance Report provides a general performance and progress profile as to how the Council is improving the level of efficiency and effectiveness of its services in line with its Council Plan. (50,51)
  - The Council's Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan as agreed by County Council in January 2016 also provides a longer term (10 year) view which is to be reviewed on a periodic basis. (50,51)
  - The Council's People, Digital and Customer Strategies are reviewed and developed as part of Portfolio planning and monitoring. (50)
  - The Council engages with a range of benchmarking groups such as the Association of Public Service Excellence; Consortium of Local Authorities in Wales; CIPFA etc. to review service quality and productivity. (51)
  - The Wales Audit Office review the Council's performance and value for money arrangements through their Improvement Assessment work and report their findings in various letters and their Annual Improvement Report. (51,52)
  - The benefits of collaborative working with partners can be seen through the work of the Flintshire Public Services Board and its predecessor the Local Service Board. Flintshire is the lead on the North Wales Residual Waste Treatment Project, having recognised that the scale and cost was beyond the capacity of a single local authority acting alone. The value of partnership and collaborative working is recognised by the Council as something that helps sustain services and provides added value to programmes such as intervention and prevention, where one partner acting alone cannot effect the change that is needed. (52)
  - The Council's [People Strategy](#) has been considered and endorsed by the Cabinet and the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee. (53)

- Employee capacity and assurance methodologies to support change management have been developed by the Council using such techniques as transition plan management, workforce succession plans and service resilience and efficiency statements. (53)

### **Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals**

54. Developing protocols to ensure that elected and appointed leaders negotiate their respective roles early on in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained.
55. Publishing a statement that specifies the types of decisions delegated to the executive and those reserved for the collective decision making of the Council.
56. Ensuring the leader and the chief executive have clearly defined and distinctive leadership roles within a structure whereby the chief executive leads the Council in implementing strategy and managing the delivery of services and other outputs set by members and each provides a check and a balance for each other's authority.
57. Developing the capabilities of members and senior management to achieve effective shared leadership and to enable the Council to respond successfully to changing legal and policy demands as well as economic, political and environmental changes and risks.
58. Ensuring employees have access to appropriate induction tailored to their role with ongoing training and development matching individual and organisational requirements is available and encouraged.
59. Ensuring members and employee have the appropriate skills, knowledge, resources and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities and ensuring that they are able to continuously update their knowledge.
60. Ensuring personal, organisational and system-wide development through shared learning, including lessons learnt from both internal and external governance weaknesses.
61. Ensuring that there are structures in place to encourage public participation
62. Taking steps to consider the leadership's own effectiveness and ensuring leaders are open to constructive feedback from peer review and inspections.
63. Holding employees to account through regular performance reviews which take account of training and development needs.
64. 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.

- The Council has adopted a Constitution, last reviewed May 2016, which includes a Delegation Scheme which identifies those decisions reserved to the County Council for decision, those local choice issues which are decided by the County Council, those decisions which will be taken by the Cabinet or its individual members, and those which are delegated to Chief Officers and senior officers. Local choice issues are reviewed at the Council's Annual Meeting. In this respect, the basic principle on which these rules are established is that the full Council sets the strategic direction through the adoption of policies and the budget, the Cabinet takes major decisions within the overall policy and budget framework and helps to develop new policies and officers take the day to day decisions within the policy and budget framework. The Delegation Scheme is subject to frequent review. (54,55)



- The Constitution sets out clearly the role of the Leader and Cabinet and in particular makes it clear that they are responsible for providing effective strategic leadership to the Council and for ensuring that the Council successfully discharges its overall responsibilities for the activities of the organisation as a whole. It also ensures through Financial Procedure Rules and the Scheme of Delegated Powers that there is effective control over the day to day conduct of the Council's business by requiring Member approval for decisions outside defined parameters. (56)
- The Council's Constitution includes the names and a description of the portfolios held by the Leader and other Members of the Cabinet. Their respective roles have been agreed and documented. Role descriptions are in place for all chairs and vice-chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Committees, regulatory committees and Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committees are similarly documented.(57)
- Following the implementation of the new senior management structure in 2012, the Council is in a better position to respond successfully to changes in legal and policy demands. (57)
- Managers are responsible for ensuring all new employees have an induction. There is a generic induction checklist which is completed in addition to a service specific induction. The generic induction session is provided to groups of new employees and includes modules on customer care and governance. (58)
- Following County Council elections a Member induction programme is devised and delivered. The Council ensures that Members have the skills required to undertake their roles and that those skills are developed on a continuing basis to improve performance through: (59)
  - Development and training programmes, including those provided by professional organisations.
  - Member induction training.
  - A mentoring system for Members.
  - An annual Member Development Programme.
  - The Council's Member Development Strategy.
  - Training on the Members' Code of Conduct.
  - Specific training for Members on planning, licensing, audit and risk management.
- Section 11 and Appendix 1 of the Council's Constitution details the roles of the Head of Paid Services, Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer) and Statutory Head of Democratic Services. Job descriptions are also in place for all senior officers of the Council and the senior management structure is kept under review to ensure its continued appropriateness.
- For employees there is a competency based appraisal framework in place that is used to monitor and measure performance, competency, delivery of objectives within the services and any training and personal development needs. Succession planning is a key to manage the future skills and knowledge. Availability of coaching and mentoring. (59)
- The development of action plans as a response to issues raised by the Council's regulators, the emphasis which is placed on keeping Members informed and involved with new developments through workshops and the use of officer appraisals are all indicative of the Council's commitment

to being a 'learning organisation' (60)

- The Council holds annual public consultation meetings on budget proposals, in addition to having a compliments and complaints scheme and statutory protocols for public engagement in Overview & Scrutiny (61)
- The Council welcomes peer reviews of both governance arrangements and service delivery to improve the effectiveness of leadership. (62)
- The Council ensures that career structures are in place for all employees and encourages participation and development through: (62,63)
  - development of a Corporate Performance Management framework
  - development of a People Strategy
  - periodic restructuring of the Council's senior management
  - annual competency based appraisals and continuous professional development
- The Council ensures that employees have the skills required to undertake their roles and that those skills are developed on a continuing basis to improve performance through: (63)
  - Employee appraisal as part of a performance management system which also identifies training and development needs and how these will be met
  - Induction training
  - Talent management
  - The development of leadership and management behavioural competencies
  - Development and training programmes, including those provided by professional organisations
  - Management Development Programme
  - Senior Management Academi
- All HR policies and Health and Wellbeing Policies are available on the internal Infonet. These include Manager support toolkits; Occupational Health support; development/revision of policies e.g. Drug and Alcohol abuse / Domestic abuse. The Council has also introduced an Employee Assistance Programme, 'Carefirst', which provides support 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. (64)

## E. Core principle: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong financial management

### Managing risks through performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

#### Managing risk

65. Recognising that risk management is an integral part of all activities and must be considered in all aspects of decision making.
66. Implementing robust and integrated risk management arrangements and ensuring that they are working effectively.
67. Ensuring that responsibilities for managing individual risks are clearly allocated.

- A refreshed approach to risk management, approved by the Audit Committee in June 2015, incorporates: (65)
  - Enhanced descriptions of risk including an explanation of the impact if the ‘risk’ were to be realised and become the ‘issue’ to be dealt with.
  - A more sophisticated risk matrix, moving from a 3 x 3 matrix to a 6 x 4 matrix for likelihood and impact; allowing more options to show how the risk is increasing or decreasing dependent on the success of mitigating actions and influence of external conditions.
  - Clearer guidance for escalating and reviewing/reporting risk; the more the significant the risk, the more frequently it is reviewed.
  - An improved format to capture both new and emerging risks and also allow for a risk to be ‘closed’ once it has been mitigated or realised as an issue being dealt with.
  - The reporting of ‘risk’ more prominently within Council reports
- Operational risks are captured and monitored through supporting plans and strategies within their operational areas and through project/programme boards as appropriate. Partnership and project risks are captured by and reported to the appropriate boards. (65,66)
- The Council identifies and evaluates its strategic risks in relation to the priorities within the Council Plan. These form the basis of the Council’s strategic risk register. Accountability for risk ownership is clearly recorded within the CAMMS system for all strategic risks. Portfolio Business Plan risk owners are also clearly identified on the risk trackers. Strategic risks are reported on a quarterly basis to Cabinet and the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees as part of the Council Plan Monitoring Reports. Accountability for operational risks are detailed within individual service plans with clear escalation procedures in place to escalate from an operational to strategic risk. Additionally, Audit Committee receives a report twice yearly which includes a strategic risk summary/overview and seeks assurance on actions taken to reduce risks. (66,67)

#### Managing performance

68. Monitoring service delivery effectively including planning, specification, execution and independent post implementation review.

69. Making decisions based on relevant, clear objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks inherent in the organisation's financial, social and environmental position and outlook.
70. Ensuring an effective scrutiny or oversight function is in place which encourages constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives before, during and after decisions are made thereby enhancing the Council's performance and that of any organisation for which it is responsible.
71. Providing members and senior management with regular reports on service delivery plans and on progress towards outcome achievement.
72. Ensuring there is consistency between specification stages (such as budgets) and post implementation reporting (e.g. financial statements).

- Portfolio business efficiency plans focus on service reform through reduced operating costs, modernisation and improvement. Portfolio business plans and the associated efficiency tracking is being scheduled to be automated via the CAMMS Performance Management system. Post implementation review and learning is undertaken at project level and also on a more collective basis by the Chief Officer team. (68)
- Integrated impact assessments to review financial, social and environmental implications, risks and mitigations have been developed by the Council to bring a co-ordinated and considered model of transparency to aid decision-making. (69)
- The Council has six Overview & Scrutiny committees (Community & Enterprise; Corporate Resources; Education & Youth; Environment; Organisational Change and Social & Healthcare), which are politically balanced and comprise 15 elected members each. Each acts as a critical friend, providing constructive challenge in order to contribute to continuous service improvement. The terms of the committees were redrawn with effect from the 2015 Annual meeting of Council, following an extensive review of the committee structure. The role of Overview & Scrutiny is to:
  - hold the Cabinet to account,
  - assist in improving and developing Council policies,
  - monitor service delivery; and
  - Contribute to improving the local community.

This role is discharged both through consultation by the Cabinet and Chief Officers and also through the 'calling in' of Cabinet decisions by the six functional Overview & Scrutiny Committees. Each of those Committees engages in performance monitoring and management through the consideration of appropriate items such as performance objectives and indicator outturns, risk identification and mitigation. The work programmes of Overview & Scrutiny are updated and published on a regular basis. The involvement of the Overview & Scrutiny committees in Improvement and Performance is a key function, with reports being made to each of the committees on at least a quarterly basis. Members also sit on Programme Boards where progress and outcomes against service delivery plans is monitored. (70,71)

- The agendas and minutes of meetings are published on the Council's website and the Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report is published each autumn. (70,71)

- The Councils budget monitoring process and reports ensure that there is consistency between specification stages and budgets and post implementation reporting in financial statements, formal budget monitoring reports are reported to Members monthly at both Cabinet and the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee.(72)

### **Robust internal control**

73. Aligning the risk management strategy and policies on internal control with achieving the Council's objectives.
74. Evaluating and monitoring the Council's risk management and internal control on a regular basis.
75. Ensuring effective counter-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are in place.
76. Ensuring additional assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control is provided by the internal auditor.
77. Ensuring an audit committee or equivalent group or function which is independent of the executive provides a further source of effective assurance arrangements for managing risk and maintain an effective control environment and that its recommendations are listened to and acted upon.

- The Council's Risk Management Strategy and Policy plus other internal controls (financial, legal, workforce) align to the efficient and effective delivery of the Council's objectives in the Council Plan and those of the portfolio Business Plans, other portfolio strategic plans and individual service plans.(73)
- The Risk Management Strategy and Policy is reviewed and endorsed by the Audit Committee; its outcomes and effectiveness being reviewed at least half yearly through the strategic risk reports. In addition Internal Audit undertakes regular specific reviews of the effectiveness of the Risk Management Strategy
- Compliance with the Code of Practice on Managing Risk of Fraud and Corruption (CIPFA 2014) is assessed at each revision, non-compliance is identified and actions are taken to ensure compliance in line with [Corporate Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy](#). (75)
- The Internal Audit service is provided in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and in accordance with the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit. Internal Audit 'generally conforms' with the PSIAS requirements according to a self-assessment and external assessment in 2016/17, which means that the relevant structures, policies and procedures of the department, as well as the processes by which they are applied, comply with the requirements of the Standards and of the Code of Ethics in all material respects. (76)
- The Council has an Audit Committee consisting of seven politically balanced Members and a lay member. The Chair and Vice Chair are chosen by the Committee itself from amongst the opposition group(s), non-aligned Councillors, or lay member. It meets on a regular basis and is advised by the Council's Internal Audit Manager, and is normally attended by representatives of the Council's external auditors. All Members receive training and it is a requirement that only trained substitutes are allowed. The Audit Committee is further supported in the discharge of its functions

by:-

- Having appropriate arrangements in place for delivery of an adequate and effective Internal Audit function and ensuring adequate reporting arrangements to safeguard its independence.
- An up to date risk based Internal Audit Plan.
- Systematic risk assessments in all areas of the Council's activities; both at a strategic level supporting the Council's improvement priorities and at an operational Chief Officer level. (77)

## Managing Data

78. Ensuring effective arrangements are in place for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data, including processes to ensure the security of personal data used.
79. Ensuring effective arrangements are in place and operating effectively when sharing data with other bodies.
80. Reviewing and auditing regularly the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring.

- The Data Management Framework and procedures are available to all employees via the Council's internal Infonet. (78)
- Data Protection is within the remit of the Information Governance Manager. Under the revised General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), there is a statutory Data Protection Officer position that must be independent and report directly to the Chief Executive. The responsibilities of the Data Protection Officer have been allocated to the Information Governance Manager and Internal Audit, the role has been split to ensure independent scrutiny. Additional resource has been allocated to support the implementation of GDPR and good progress is being made towards the implementation in May 2018.(78)
- Data protection policies and procedures are available on the website: (78)  
<http://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/Resident/Data-Protection-and-Freedom-of-Information/Data-Protection.aspx>  
<http://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/Resident/Contact-Us/Privacy-Notice.aspx>
- There is a template for Data Processing Agreements and all Managers are required to send completed versions to the Information Governance Team to be held centrally. (78)
- The Council is signed up to the Wales Accord for Sharing Personal Information (WASPI). All Information Sharing Protocols (ISP's) must be approved in line with the WASPI requirements. A log of all ISP's is held internally but is also available on the WASPI website  
<http://www.waspi.org/> (79)
- To comply with Data validation procedures all new IT systems must be assessed against the IT Technical Specification, this includes Data

Validation. Suppliers will respond as compliant, partial compliant or non-compliant. Individual Service Managers will then decide whether to proceed based on the Supplier's response. (78,79,80)

- The Council is subject to an annual independent security assessment in order to connect to the Public Sector Network (PSN). (78)
- The quality and accuracy of data is checked in a number of ways: performance data is produced through the CAMMS system (internal controls and rules are prescribed by the Council) and also quality checked to ensure 'sense' and readability. Additionally, external checks are made by other bodies such as Wales Audit Office and Local Government Data Unit to ensure compliance with guidance. (80)

### **Strong public financial management**

81. Ensuring the Council's financial management supports both long term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance.
82. Ensuring well-developed financial management is integrated at all organisational levels of planning and control, including management of financial risks and controls.

- The Council has a [Medium Term Financial Strategy](#) which is published on the web site. (81)
- The strategy is in two parts, the first part forecasts the resources the Council is likely to have over the next three years and part two sets out the plans and solutions to managing with reducing resources.(81)
- Business efficiency plans are one of three parts of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy focusing on service reform through reduced operating costs, modernisation and improvement. (82)
- The Council's process for setting its annual revenue budget and capital programme is set out in the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the Constitution. When the Council sets its budget, elected members take account of the level of risk and uncertainty regarding its budgetary estimates in the context of the prevailing economy, public services' climate and the demand for services. (82)
- The Council operates a scheme of delegated budgets supported by the Corporate Finance team which consists of central and service based finance teams supporting budget managers. Revenue budget monitoring reports, including full year forecasts, are reported to the Cabinet and the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a monthly basis. Capital Programme monitoring reports are reported to the Cabinet and the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis. In both instances, these reports identify reasons for variances and set out any corrective action that is proposed. (82)
- The Council has adopted the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants (CIPFA) Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code

of Practice. Treasury Management is conducted in accordance with the Council's Treasury Management Policy and Strategy Statement and Treasury Management Practices which are both reviewed annually. All borrowing and long term financing is made in accordance with CIPFA's Prudential Code. Treasury Management update reports are made to the Audit Committee, Cabinet and Council on a quarterly basis. (82)

- Wales Audit Office have issued the Council's [Financial Resilience Report](#) (published end Nov. 2017) (82)
- The Council has established an internal set of performance indicators for the Medium Term Financial Strategy; a selection of which are set and monitored within the Council Plan (82)



## F. Core principle: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability

### Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability

#### Implementing good practice in transparency

83. Writing and communicating reports for the public and other stakeholders in an understandable style appropriate to the intended audience and ensuring that they are easy to access and interrogate.
84. Striking a balance between providing the right amount of information to satisfy transparency demands and enhance public scrutiny whilst not being too onerous for the Council to provide and for users to understand.

- The Council puts as much information as possible on the Council's website, in both English and Welsh. The report format has been revised to make reports simpler and shorter, with a glossary of technical terms now included. Report guidance for report authors has also been refreshed. The [Council's publication scheme](#) under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 is available on the website, so that public and stakeholders can see what information is readily accessible. (83,84)
- Easy read versions of strategies and public documents are made where possible for publication on the website. (83,84)

#### Implementing good practices in reporting

85. Reporting at least annually on performance, value for money and the stewardship of its resources.
  86. Ensuring members and senior management own the results.
  87. Ensuring robust arrangements for assessing the extent to which the principles contained in this Framework have been applied and publishing the results on this assessment including an action plan for improvement and evidence to demonstrate good governance (Annual Governance Statement).
  88. Ensuring that the Framework is applied to jointly managed or shared service organisations as appropriate.
  89. Ensuring the performance information that accompanies the financial statements is prepared on a consistent and timely basis and the statements allow for comparison with other, similar organisations.
- The Council publishes its [Annual Performance Report](#) and [Statement of Accounts](#) on the website. (85)

- The Statement of the Authority's Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts is signed by the Chair of the County Council and the Chief Finance Officer. (86)
- The Council produces this annual Code of Corporate Governance and a Governance Statement which are produced in accordance with CIPFA/Solace principles. (87)
- An Annual Governance Statement is presented to Audit Committee and Council for approval every year. Once approved the Statement is signed by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive. The statement explains how the Council has complied with the Code of Corporate Governance, and met the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2014. The Code of Corporate Governance and the Annual Governance Statement are published on the Council's website. (87)
- If applicable, an appropriate accounting framework would be applied to jointly managed or shared services. (88)
- An audited and signed Statement of Accounts is published on an annual basis to reflect a true and fair view of the Council's financial position, as judged by the Council's external auditor (currently Wales Audit Office). Contained within the Statement of Accounts is a statement of responsibilities which confirms: - (89)
  - Compliance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in Great Britain.
  - The Council manages its affairs to secure economic, efficient and effective use of resources and safeguard its assets.
  - Suitable accounting policies have been selected and consistently applied.
  - Judgements and estimates made are reasonable and prudent.
  - Reasonable steps have been taken to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularities.
  - Proper accounting records have been kept and are up to date.

### **Assurance and effective accountability**

90. Ensuring that recommendations for corrective action made by external audit are acted upon.
91. Ensuring an effective internal audit service with direct access to members is in place which provides assurance with regard to the Council's governance arrangements and recommendations are acted upon.
92. Welcoming peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and implementing recommendations.
93. Gaining assurance on risks associated with delivering services through third parties and that this is evidenced in the annual governance statement
94. Ensuring that when working in partnership, arrangements for accountability are clear and that the need for wider public accountability has been recognised and met.

- External arrangements for regulation and assurance are provided by a number of statutorily appointed bodies principally the Wales Audit Office

(WAO), Estyn and the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW).The Council has a well-established practice of dealing with findings from the external regulatory bodies through referral to committees, formal responses and tracking, and open publication of regulatory reports in committee papers (with availability on the website). An annual summary report is presented to the Audit Committee showing all regulatory reports, their findings, the Council's response and where they were reported to. (90) In addition to external regulation by statutorily appointed bodies the Council welcomes peer challenge from local government and the public services family e.g. Welsh Local Government peer review of Finance. (92)

- The Council also undertakes regular self-assessments of its services through service review approaches and business efficiency planning. External validation of these assessments is also welcomed via benchmarking and commissioned assessments. (92)
- The Internal Audit service is provided in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and in accordance with the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit. Internal Audit 'generally conforms' with the PSIAS requirements according to a self-assessment and external assessments in 2016/17 which means that the relevant structures, policies and procedures of the department, as well as the processes by which they are applied, comply with the requirements of the Standards and of the Code of Ethics in all material respects. (91)
- Following the review of the Overview & Scrutiny committee structure in 2014/15, an Organisational Change Overview & Scrutiny Committee is now in place. With a move towards alternative delivery models (ADM) for service provision, together with Community Asset Transfers (CAT) of major facilities such as Connah's Quay Swimming Pool and Holywell Leisure Centre, the Committee provides the supportive capacity and capability to deal with such new approaches. The committee is involved in the developmental stage of major work areas - something which has not been done previously. Members were reminded of the new approach to working style in the report to the Organisational Change Overview & Scrutiny Committee in November 2015 – [\*The role of the committee in supporting Organisational change.\*](#) (93/94)

## **Assurance Statements**

I am satisfied that there are effective governance arrangements in place, including a sound system of internal control, throughout the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 and that this is ongoing.

<b>Signed</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Date</b>
	Chief Executive	
	Section 151 Officer	
	Chief Officer - Governance	