

2020/21

Flintshire County Council
Annual Governance Statement
Part 2

Draft

What is the purpose of this document?

This document details our assessment against the Council's Corporate Governance Framework and identifies the areas of best practise and areas for further improvement. The document explains:

- What is the Annual Governance Statement
- Governance response to the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Comparison of the Effectiveness of the Council's Governance Framework
- Key principles of the Corporate Governance Framework and our statement:
 - Principle A - Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of the law
 - Principle B - Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
 - Principle C - Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits
 - Principle D - Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes
 - Principle E - Developing our organisations capacity, including the capability of our leadership and the individuals within it
 - Principle F - Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management
 - Principle G - Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability
- How have we addressed the governance and strategic issues from 2019/20 AGS
- What are the significant governance issues identified during 2020/21
- What are the significant strategic issues identified during 2020/21
- Certification of the Annual Governance Statement

What is the Annual Governance Statement?

The Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2018 require us to prepare a statement on internal control. Like many authorities in Wales, this is referred to as the 'Annual Governance Statement'. This is a public document that reports on the extent to which we as the Council comply with our own code of governance.

In this document, we, the Council:

- Acknowledge our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of governance;
- summarise the key elements of that governance framework and the roles of those responsible for the development and maintenance of the governance environment;
- describe how we have monitored and evaluated the effectiveness of our governance arrangements in year, and any planned changes in the coming period;
- provide details of how we have responded to any issue(s) identified in last year's governance statement; and
- report on any significant governance issues identified from this review and provide a commitment to addressing them.

The Annual Governance Statement reports on the governance framework that has been in place at Flintshire County Council during the financial year 2020/21 and up to the date of approval of the Statement of Accounts.

Governance response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

At the beginning of 2020/21 saw the emergence of an increasing impact of the Corona Virus/Covid 19 emergency. The 'lock down' period commenced on 23rd March. Successive lockdowns have characterised 2020/21. Our formal Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings were cancelled between April and June, resuming as 'Remote Attendance Meetings' utilising WebEx video technology at the start of July. The Council's response to the pandemic was through the Emergency Management Response Team (EMRT), led by the Chief Executive which worked through significant changes to our working lives and culture.

2020/21 has seen a step change for Flintshire, as for many other organisations. Necessity has been the mother of invention. We introduced Individual Cabinet Member decision making on a temporary basis for April and May, until Cabinet resumed. We held virtual planning Committee, using written submissions in April, before an actual Remote Attendance Meeting could be held.

All employees whose role allowed it were equipped to work from home. Essential services were resumed on a 'safe' basis as soon as possible. Our Members were kept informed and involved in a series of Member Bulletins, initially several times a week before settling down to weekly updates.

Whilst the pandemic severely impacted the delivery of projects within our digital strategy, the use of technology to facilitate the delivery of services from home has increased the appetite and engagement in digital delivery. The way that we were able to use our information to support vulnerable residents through the Shielding Programme has also highlighted the value of developing high quality data and the potential improvements that can be made by securely sharing information across the council and with our partners.

A politically balanced Member Recovery Board, supported by the statutory and specialist officers as necessary was set up. Working together, the Recovery Board operated between May and September, discharging elements of decision making as well as scrutiny. The terms of reference of the Board were tightly drawn:

- (1) to advise on, and keep under review, the aims and objectives to be set for recovery;
- (2) to advise on the priority actions required for both the Organisational Recovery Board and the Community Recovery Board;
- (3) to keep under review the Corporate Recovery Risk Register and assure the planned risk mitigation actions;

- (4) to advise on the adequacy of the internal control environment – governance, legal, financial, employment, systems and data management, other; and
- (5) to advise on the steps and actions required to return democratic governance to a fully functioning state

The Recovery Board handed over responsibilities to the Cabinet and the five Overview & Scrutiny committees in mid-September.

Our Audit Manager from Audit Wales wrote to the Council at the end of August as follows: *From the work that Audit Wales has undertaken to date, I am assured that Flintshire County Council's (the council) recovery from the impact of the pandemic has benefitted from strong and consistent leadership, particularly in planning and decision making. There has been a drive to engage and lead regional groups which is positive. Internal and external communication has been very strong and it is to the Council's credit.*

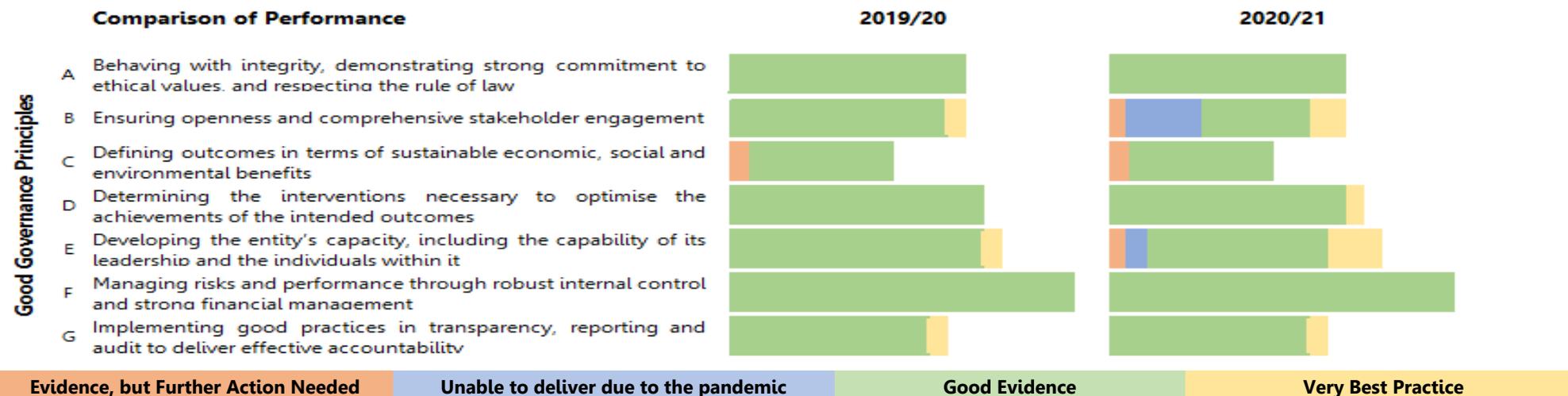
I consider that the Council's approach to recovery is well structured and well thought through. The Council has taken the time to reflect on its response actions and learnt from them. As a result, should it be necessary to revert to response mode to manage any resurgence of the virus, the Council will be better placed to deal with the crisis than it was before.

Our Annual Meeting of Council was held on 9th September, at which point the new five committee Overview & Scrutiny structure commenced.

For 2019/20, it had been our intention to have a formal contribution to the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) from the Members of the Governance & Audit Committee. However, the Covid 19 emergency and subsequent lock down meant this was not possible. The greater involvement of Governance & Audit Committee Members has been incorporated into the 2020/21 Annual Governance Statement process.

Reports on the implementation of the Local Government & Elections Act 2021 have been made to Governance & Audit Committee, Constitution & Democratic Services Committee and to Council. This has included preparations for the Audit Committee becoming the 'Governance & Audit Committee' from 1st April 2021.

Comparison of the Effectiveness of the Council’s Governance Framework



Further Action Required:

- Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits
- Using formal and informal consultation and engagement to determine the most appropriate and effective interventions /courses of action
- Ensuring improved structures are in place for public participation

Areas of Very Best Practice:

- Developing formal and informal partnerships to allow for resources to be used more effectively and outcomes achieved more effectively
- Ensuring that partnerships are based on trust, a shared commitment to change, a culture that promotes and accepts challenge among partners
- 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
- Recognising the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved
- Developing and maintaining an effective workforce plan to enhance strategic allocation of resources
- Welcoming peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and implementing recommendations

Annual Internal Audit Opinion 2020/21: “For the year ending 31 March 2021, based on the work the Internal Audit Service has undertaken, the direct assurance from management and external assurance from Audit Wales, my opinion is that Flintshire County Council has an adequate and effective framework of governance, risk management and internal control”.

Internal Audit Manager, Flintshire County Council

Key principles of the Corporate Governance Framework

We aim to achieve a good standard of governance by adhering to the seven key principles of the CIPFA/Solace 2016 – Guidance Notes for Welsh Authorities, which form the basis of the Local Code of Corporate Governance. In the following section we have defined how we achieve the standard against the seven key principles which are:

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

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

Sub Principles	How we do this / How we achieve this
Behaving with Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The behaviour and expectations of Members and Officers are set out in our Codes of Conduct, Constitution, and a suite of policies and procedures • Codes of Conduct for Members and Officers specify the requirements around declarations of interests formally and at the beginning of meetings, gifts and hospitality etc • We take fraud seriously. Key policies are in place to prevent, minimise and manage such occurrences • Compliance with policies and protocols e.g. Contract Procedure Rules • Enhanced profile of Internal Audit
Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A set of leadership competencies are deployed in each Portfolio and led by each Chief Officer • Our recruitment policy, training and competencies based appraisal processes underpin personal behaviours with ethical values • Robust policies and procedures are in place, subject to formal approval prior to adoption by formal committees • All contracts and external service providers, including partnerships are engaged through the robust procurement process and follow the Contract Procedure rules regulations • Application of the corporate operating model; working internally to promote high standards of professional performance and ethical behaviour to achieve organisational priorities and objectives
Respecting the rule of law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We ensure that our Members and Officers fulfil legislative and regulatory • We ensure that the full use of the Council powers are optimised by regular challenge and keeping abreast of new legislation to achieve corporate priorities have an Effective Anti-Fraud and Corruption framework • Our Monitoring Officer is responsible for ensuring the Council complies with the law and avoids maladministration. Our Constitution & Democratic Services Committee promotes high standards of conduct which are monitored by the Standards Committee

What has worked well during 2020/21
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open decision making on the basis of evidence and principle is at the heart of the standard form of reporting to Council, Cabinet and committees

Principle B – Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Sub Principles	How we do this/how we achieve this
Openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committed to having an open culture, demonstrated through accessible website, policies and procedures and open environment meetings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The most appropriate and effective interventions / courses of action are determined using formal and informal consultation and engagement. Consultation principles ○ Formal and informal engagement models with employees and communities e.g. alternative delivery models Member workshops ○ County Forum (Town and Community Councils) ○ Positive engagement with Trade Unions both formally and informally
Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We engage effectively with stakeholders to ensure successful and sustainable outcomes by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Effective application and delivery of communication strategies to support delivery ○ Targeting communications and effective use of Social Media ○ Effective stakeholder engagement on strategic issues ○ Service led feedback questionnaires and events • Effective use of resources and achievement of outcomes is undertaken by the Council both through informal and formal partnerships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Extensive range of partnerships to support the delivery of the Council’s strategic priorities, including the Public Services Board ○ Open and productive partnership arrangements supported by an effective governance framework ○ Trust and good relations lead to delivery of intended outcomes e.g. community asset transfers
Engaging stakeholders effectively, including individual citizens and service users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The achievement of intended outcomes by services is supported by a range of meaningful guidance on consultation engagement and feedback techniques with individual citizens, service users and other stakeholders • We have structures in place to encourage public participation governed through the Communication and Social Media Policies. These include the following (but not all have been possible during the last year because of Covid restrictions; E-newsletters, The Council’s website, Tenants Forums, Service user groups, Quality circles, Use of infographics

What has worked well during 2020/21	During 20/21 what was affected by the Pandemic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal and informal partnerships from strategic levels (PSB) to operational partnerships (Community Endowment Fund / Regional Armed Forces Partnership) • Good relationship management with partners • Partnership working based on trust and commitment has increased and evidenced strongly during this year in response to the pandemic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response to the pandemic has impacted on our ability to consult. Due to the pandemic there was need for a directive approach to communication • Feedback from key consultations; providing information on views taken into account
	<p>Areas identified for Further Improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circumstances have curtailed our ability to consult and engage, but not the willingness so to do. Further planning required following the legislation on Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021

Principle C – Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits

Sub Principles	How we do this/how we achieve this
Defining outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have a clear vision describing the organisation’s purpose and intended outcomes which is achieved through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Linking of vision and intent to the MTFS ○ Service Planning consideration including sustainability of service delivery • Risk Management is applied consistently at all levels ensuring consistent application of risk process and terminology • The development of the County’s Well-being Plan and delivery of the Public Services Board’s priorities ensure that public services work effectively together to add value • Annual Performance Report contains recommendations of improvements or area of priority working for the following year
Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When deciding future service provision we take a longer term view, balancing the economic, social, environmental impact along with the wider public interest. This is supported by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Longer term business planning and budgeting using effective forecasting models ○ Multi-disciplinary approach to policy development delivering defined outcomes and ensuring fair access to services ○ Procurement strategy defines expectations around economic, social and environment benefits which inform service specifications, tenders and contracts ○ Communication plans for public and community engagement

What has worked well during 2020/21	During 20/21 what was affected by the Pandemic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early development of Portfolio Business Recovery Plans with a risk based approach ensured effective planning • Member workshops/briefing sessions • In addition to the normal budget management process significant monitoring took place to manage the additional expenses / funding received / reallocation of resources to address the pandemic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Planning was halted and replaced with response and recovery strategy
	<p>Areas identified for Further Improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although the financial sustainability of the Council has largely remained unchanged, the long term financial impact on the Council from COVID19 is currently unknown

Principle D – Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

Sub Principles	How we do this/how we achieve this
Determining interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full engagement with Members on a longer term basis e.g. MTFS, Recovery Strategy, Business Planning and other key workforce strategies e.g. digital and procurement • The MTFS and budget setting process provides opportunities for all public, stakeholders to be engaged in considering options. • Active engagement of key decision making in the development of initial ideas, options and potential outcomes and risks e.g. ADM Programme, Gateways • Clear option appraisals, including the use of forecasting models, to ensure best value is achieved • Regular budget monitoring for each Portfolio • Application of Integrated Impact Assessments
Planning interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We established and implemented robust planning and control cycles covering response and recovery through Emergency Management Response Team • We applied the risk management principles when developing the Recovery Strategy and Portfolio Business Recovery Plans • Regular monitoring of business planning, efficiency and reliability including feedback • Service performance is measured by establishing a range of local indicators, which are regularly monitored, reported and used for recovery monitoring
Optimising achievement of intended outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource requirements are identified through the business planning process, including any projected shortfall in those requirements. • Regular engagement and ownership of the budget process is undertaken through the Chief Officer Team and in consultation with Members through workshops and the scrutiny process • Social values are achieved through the effective commissioning of services and compliance with Council procedures • Consultation and engagement events, particularly relating to ongoing decisions on significant service delivery issues or to changes in the external environment set the context for the MTFS for both residents and employees

What has worked well during 2020/21
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early development of Portfolio Business Recovery Plans with a risk based approach ensured effective planning

Principle E – Developing our organisations capacity, including the capability of our leadership and the individuals within it

Sub Principles	How we do this/how we achieve this
Developing our organisation’s capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We review our operations, performance, and use of assets on a regular basis to ensure their continuing effectiveness through service delivery reviews, performance and risk management and Programme Boards’ development and monitoring • We review the sufficiency and appropriateness of resource allocation through techniques such as benchmarking internally against previous performances and to support internal challenge, and normally externally to identify improvement opportunities • Benefits of collaborative and partnership working both regionally and nationally to ensure added value is achieved by linking services and organisation priorities to partnership working • Develop and maintain the workforce plan to enhance the strategic allocation of resources and future workforce and succession planning
Developing the capability of our organisation’s leadership and other individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective shared leadership which enables us to respond successfully to changing external demands and risks is supported by a range of management and leadership development programme, run in partnership with Coleg Cambria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive have clearly defined and distinct leadership roles • Individual and organisational requirements are supported through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Corporate induction for new employees to the Council and service specific inductions for employees in new jobs ○ Opportunities for continued learning and development for employees ○ A comprehensive range of learning and development opportunities available ○ Feedback and shared learning to the organisations both through reports and interactive sessions such as the Senior leaders ‘Academi’ • Support and maintain physical and mental wellbeing of the workforce, via our in-house Occupational Health Service, Care First (Employee Assistance Programme) and a range of internal training and awareness sessions to support mental, financial and physical health related issues.

What has worked well during 2020/21	During 20/21 what was affected by the Pandemic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership and collaborative working – regional and nationally • Lead on regional partnerships e.g. residual waste project • Successful local partnerships e.g. Public Services Board • Service specific inductions have taken place. New methods have been used to recruit and induct new starters through the pandemic which will be retained • Responded well to the challenges of the pandemic through the deployment of employees e.g. TTP, environmental Health • Increased workforce comms, introduction of wellbeing appraisals, strong recognition of mental health impacts and support networks provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmarking against peers due to lack of need to submit nationally • The modernisation of a corporate induction has been compromised due to the pandemic
	<p>Areas identified for Further Improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structures for public participations have still been in place, but ability to deliver has been curtailed due to the pandemic

Principle F – Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

Sub Principles	How we do this/how we achieve this
Managing risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council has clear and concise risk management framework. There are a number of risk registers which are reported regularly which outline the risks faced by the Council and its service areas. These all include, current risk ratings and target risk ratings supported by mitigation comments
Managing performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members and senior management are provided with regular reports on service performance against key performance indicators and milestones against recovery objectives Members are clearly and regularly informed of the financial position and implications including environmental and resource impacts
Robust internal control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Audit provides the Council, through the Governance & Audit Committee, with an annual independent and objective opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council’s internal control, risk management, governance arrangements and associated policies. We are dedicated to tackling fraud as detailed within the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy, Fraud Response Plan, and Whistleblowing Policy
Managing data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have effective strategic direction, advice and monitoring of information management with clear policies and procedures on personal data and provide regular training to ensure compliance with these We have appropriate Information Sharing Protocols in place in respect of all information shared with other bodies The quality and accuracy of data used for decision making and performance monitoring is supported by guidance from a range of professional bodies Internal Audit review and audit regularly the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring
Strong public financial management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Financial management arrangements support both the long term achievement of outcome and short term financial performance through the delivery of the MTFs Setting a prudent Minimum Revenue Provision for the repayment of debt The integration of all financial management and control was reviewed as part of the finance modernisation project

What has worked well during 2020/21
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implemented a revised risk management framework at the early stages of response to the pandemic. Maintained performance monitoring at mid and end of year

Principle G – Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability

Sub Principles	How we do this/how we achieve this
Implementing good practice in transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We recently improved the layout and presentation of our reports in order to improve the presentation of key information to decision-makers and monitor this regularly • We are mindful of providing the right amount of information to ensure transparency • A review of information sharing protocols has been undertaken and new principles adopted
Implementing good practices in reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We report at least annual on the achievement and progress of our intended outcome and financial position. This is delivered through the Annual Performance report assessing performance against the Council Plan • Progress against the Well-being Plan • Annual Statement of Accounts • Our Annual Governance Statement is published following robust and rigorous challenge to assess and demonstrate good governance
Assurance and effective accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through robust assurance mechanism, we can demonstrate effective accountability. These mechanisms include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Internal Audit undertakes independent reviews to provide an annual assurance opinion of the Council's control, risk management, and governance framework. To allow this Internal Audit has direct access to Chief Officer and Members of the Council ○ All agreed actions from Internal Audit reviews are monitored regularly through monthly reports to Chief Officers and each Governance & Audit Committee ○ Any 'limited/red' assurance opinions are reported to Governance & Audit Committee in full and progress monitored closely ○ Peer challenge and inspection from regulatory bodies and external compliance reviews. The outcomes from these inspections are used to inform and improve service delivery ○ Through effective commissioning and monitoring arrangements and compliance with Council's procedures, we gain assurance on risk associated with delivering services through third parties and any transitional risks ○ Reports are presented to Cabinet and an annual report to Governance & Audit Committee of external feedback from regulatory work and peer reviews along with the Council's responses

During 2020/21 what worked well
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open and embracing attitude / good evidence. Increased working through the workshops for all regulatory bodies in early 2020 to give an overview of suggested plans and areas of work. Despite the pandemic inspections and external reviews have continued with Audit Wales reviewing how the Council managed the impact of the pandemic. Best practice was shared with other LAs

How have we addressed the governance and strategic issues from 2019/20 AGS?

The 2019/20 Annual Governance Statement contained 12 key improvement areas. Of these areas:

- One Internal Governance issue remains open and this is included within the 2020/21 actions;
- Three Strategic issues remain open and included within the 2020/21 actions; and
- Eight strategic issues were closed and detailed within the table below

Ref	Closed Internal Governance & Strategic Issues detailed in 2019/20 AGS	Reason for Closure
1	Debt levels will rise if tenants are unable to afford to pay their rent or council tax	Risk closed, reclassified and included within the Corporate Recovery Risk Register
2	Demand outstrips supply for residential and nursing home care bed availability	Risk closed, reclassified and included within the Social Services Risk Register
3	Homelessness will remain a growing area of demand due to the current economic climate	Risk closed, reclassified and included within the Housing & Assets Risk Register
4	Meeting Internal Targets	Risk closed, reclassified and included within the Corporate Recovery Risk Register
5	Increasing costs of service delivery and rising demand for some services	Risk closed, reclassified and included within the Corporate Recovery Risk Register
6	Insufficient supply and escalating cost of placements for children with complex needs	Risk closed, reclassified and included within the Social Services Risk Register
7	Insufficient reserves level	Risk Rating has reduced and included within Corporate Recovery Risk Register
8	Insufficient reserves level impacts financial resilience	Risk Rating has reduced and included within Corporate Recovery Risk Register

What are the significant governance issues identified during 2020/21?

The review of the effectiveness of the Council’s governance framework identified two significant internal governance issue during 2020/21. Details of how the issue has been addressed and if it remains open is provided below:

Internal Council Governance issues for 2020/21	Mitigation Actions	Current Status
Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits. Also carried forward from 2019/20.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The financial sustainability of the Council has largely remained unchanged Furthermore the financial impact on the Council from COVID19 is currently unknown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open
Using formal and informal consultation and engagement to determine the most appropriate and effective interventions /courses of action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circumstances has curtailed the council's ability to consult and engage, but not the willingness so to do. Further planning required following the legislation on LG & Elections (Wales) Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open
Structures for public participations have still been in place, but ability to deliver has been curtailed due to the pandemic and could be strengthened	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of the digital strategy, exploring alternative ways to manage public participation digitally. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open

What are the significant strategic issues identified during 2020/21

The review of the effectiveness of the Council’s governance framework identified 20 significant strategic issues from during 2020/21. Details of how the issue has been addressed and if it remains open is provided below:

Strategic Issues for 2020/21	Mitigating Actions
<p>PE03 - Unable to regenerate Town Centres through implementation of the Town Centre Strategy due to insufficient resources and the compound economic consequences of the emergency situation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review is to be undertake of Town Centre Strategy
<p>CF08 - A reduction in Council Tax collection impacts on (1) cash-flow and (2) annual budget</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular monitoring of the financial impact by the revenues team to track in-year collection levels and compare to previous years • Reporting impacts to Financial TCG on a weekly basis • Regular liaison with WLGA contacts re escalation with Welsh Government • Incorporation of impact on monthly monitoring reports in 20/21
<p>CF14 - Increase in rent arrears impacts on the stability of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular weekly monitoring of the financial impact by the Housing Rents team to track in-year rent collection levels and compare to previous year • Continued use of Mobyssoft 'Rent Sense' to identify early arrears cases to allow the team to engage with and support these tenants by signposting to the support that may be available for the payment of Housing Rents • Reporting impacts to Financial TCG on a regular basis
<p>CF19 - A reduction in Business Rates collection impacts on (1) cash-flow and (2) the stability of the National Collection Pool</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular weekly tracking of the risk and interventions implemented such as advice and support to businesses by extending payments and ensuring entitlement to grants and rate reliefs • Carry out 'soft' enforcement for businesses who are falling into debt and who have not made any contact with us have been completed • Recommencement of formal debt processes for businesses who have not paid nor engaged with the Council and who owe several months of unpaid Non-Domestic Rates (NDR)
<p>CF20 - Insufficient capacity to deliver grants and rate relief whilst also recovering lost income/debts may impact debt recovery capacity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of grants and rate relief to support businesses • Aim to recoup income lost during the response phase • Additional resource has been allocated to the service to compensate for the extra workload and cover staff absences • Levels of grant delivery will be monitored weekly to ensure that local businesses maximize their entitlement to WG support and financial aid

Strategic Issues for 2020/21	Mitigating Actions
<p>CG04 - Diversion of resource to emergency management delays implementation of key digital and infrastructure projects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realignment of resources to areas of high demand to support the change of the support model for the IT Service Desk. • Reprioritisation of activities in the IT Business plan to reflect the immediate needs of the organisation
<p>CG20 - Council Tax Collections rate reduce and Impacts on cash-flow, annual budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) due to suspension of debt recovery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular monitoring of the financial impact by the revenues team • Interventions through advice regarding delaying payments, accessing support for residents through signposting to revenues and benefits team • Reporting impact to Financial TCG on a weekly basis • Regular liaison with WLGA contacts re escalation with Welsh Government • Incorporation of impact on monthly monitoring reports in 20/21 • Revised collection rate applied to MTFS forecast
<p>EY01 - Secondary schools are not financially viable due to insufficient base funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensed deficit policy revised and issued to schools • Challenge and support meetings with Headteacher/School Business Manager • Financial Performance Monitoring Group • Formula review • Local Authority approval mechanisms for recruitment
<p>CF05 - An increase in the level of debt owed to the Council.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collection of income and only make flexibilities where tax-payers, tenants, customers and businesses approach us to request support • 'Soft' enforcement has begun for tax-payers and tenants who are falling into debt and not made any contact with us • Full enforcement action cannot resume until it is sensitive to do so
<p>HA04 - Increased financial risk due to business failures and ability to anticipate Council Tax Refund Scheme (CTRS) due to business closure, unemployment, reduced hours of work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular monitoring of the number of claims and financial awards by the Benefits Team • Reporting impact to Financial Tactical command group on a weekly basis • Regular liaison with Welsh Local Government Association contacts re escalation with Welsh Government to raise awareness of potential budget impacts of rising levels of CTRS awards • Incorporation of impact on monthly monitoring reports in 20/21 • Revised Council Tax Reduction Scheme awards and potential budget pressures applied to MTFS forecast
<p>HA06 - Impacts on income stream based on delayed/non recovery of housing benefit overpayment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial monitoring – Budget and Income • Contacting customers to arrange to repayment plans at a level which suits their new income • Offering customers support and advice to claim available benefits
<p>PE12 - The implications of Ash Die back on finances and reputation of the Council due to the scale of the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise the timetable for planned surveys that could not be carried out whilst in lockdown • Established sites that will require further investigation and this will be built into future work programmes

Strategic Issues for 2020/21	Mitigating Actions
<p>problem and the ability to make safe Highways and Council amenity land</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritised surveys on Highway Routes and other FCC land with public access and school grounds as areas that have the highest risk rating for injury or damage • Engage with external Legal Counsel to advise on Ash Die Back plan, Risk Assessments and inspection regime, to test for appropriateness and reasonableness
<p>ST10 - Increased expenditure on contract, labour, plant, vehicles and materials due to changing work patterns in response to pandemic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular SMT review for the most appropriate methods of delivering service in an effective and cost-effective manner following guidance • Ensure social distancing is maintained to prevent contamination amongst crews • Monitor all additional expenditure as a result of service changes related to COVID-19 are being collated and monitored
<p>ST17a - Increased risk of ill health due to mental health and well-being, personal and/or family issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Managers/supervisors maintain contact with staff Members whom are on sick leave or have identified themselves are suffering from personal issues (bereavement; relationship separations; isolation) to ensure support and reassurance is given • Managers have and continue to facilitate opportunities for employees who need to work in office environment to support their personal wellbeing • Occupational Health referrals are made by managers for employees who might need additional support. Employees can self-refer if they prefer
<p>ST28a - Unable to gain regulatory approval (planning; Drainage; environmental permitting) to progress key infrastructure projects in a timely manner due to delays in processing applications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project teams are working with regulatory bodies to ensure that all aspects are progressed within a timely manner • External partners (WRAP) have been providing industry related expertise to assist with progress
<p>ST35 - Lack of preparedness to respond to multiple emergencies or major incidents during pandemic (severe weather event, fire, major transport accident) due to resource focused on delivering key services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the availability of key personnel and equipment in the case of an emergency or major incident • Plan for adequate contingency within the operational teams and staffing structure • Consider how resources could be redirected in the event of an emergency or major incident
<p>SS01 - Expenditure on out of county placements increases as placement costs increase in a demand led market</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Multiagency Support Team to work with families of young people on the edge of care and prevent placement breakdown • Combat exploitation through the Strategic and Operational MET (Missing, Exploitation, Trafficking) group • Develop policies and models to attract new foster carers and expand the type of placements offered • Working with local providers to reshape the residential market • Maximising local housing options

Strategic Issues for 2020/21	Mitigating Actions
<p>PE07 - Impact on service delivery due to the resilience of staff and succession planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a robust communication plan that delivers timely and consistent messages • Early Identification of the most impacted areas to allow robust monitoring and early intervention • Minimise staff impact through various actions including the re-prioritisation of work streams enabling officers to concentrate on key tasks • Redeployment of staff within the Portfolio to support those services most under pressure • Proactively managing absences and leave to support our officers in maintaining a healthy working relationship and understanding the importance of leave • Providing protection and support for key officers to enable them to carry out their duties effectively and efficiently and minimise stress and unplanned absences • Seek external support from sources (agency staff) when required and continue to monitor areas that will benefit from intervention • Manage our customers' expectations so that they fully understand any changes to service delivery • Continually review succession plan in line with lessons learnt from the pandemic to identify key areas for the Portfolio to target in providing a more robust line of succession
<p>Funding will not be secured for priority flood alleviation schemes – Carried forward from 2019/20</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At present Flintshire Council have no active schemes in the national programme. Several local sites have been identified with potential for viable flood alleviation schemes
<p>The scale of the financial challenge – Carried forward from 2019/20</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The COVID-19 Pandemic emerged towards the end of the financial year and will have a significant impact on public finances including local government • Even prior to the pandemic, the medium term was forecast to be challenging with an initial high level forecast for 2021/22 of a gap of £10m
<p>Fully funding demand led services and inflationary pressures – Carried forward from 2019/20</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council successfully developed its case through a Cross Party Working Group of Members and supporting officers to align with the work the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) • The Council will continue to press for fully funded demand led services and inflationary pressures as it progresses and updates its Medium Term Financial Strategy

Certification

The review provides good overall assurance that Flintshire County Council's arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework requirements for Local Authorities within Wales.

Opportunities to maintain and develop the Council's governance arrangements have been identified through this review. We pledge our commitment to addressing these issues over the coming year and we will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

Signed on behalf of Flintshire County Council

Colin Everett – Chief Executive

Cllr. Ian B Roberts – Leader of the Council