

Kirklees Council

Annual Governance Statement 2020/21

September 2021

Coronavirus Response

The impact of the global pandemic in Kirklees and on the Council from March 2020 was sudden, dramatic and unprecedented and has challenged the entire organisation and its governance arrangements. Significant organisational disruption, new emergency responsibilities, staff shielding and self-isolating and also working from home has impacted on addressing issues raised last year and created a multitude of potential new ones. So much so, that the issues raised so far and likely to occur during 2021/22 have been compiled into an additional separate part of this Statement together with a separate conclusion.

Nevertheless the Council has continued to deliver key services and provide support throughout this period in large measure due to the hard work and commitment of all of its staff.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all colleagues, councillors, partners and volunteers for their contributions so far which have placed the Council and the people and businesses of Kirklees in a much better place to move forward.

Overall Conclusion & Opinion

We have been advised on the extent and implications of the annual review of effectiveness of the governance framework by the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee, and although we have less assurance than would normally be the case, we are satisfied that overall the arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with our governance framework and Code of Corporate Governance.

We have begun to take steps on a priority risk basis to address the issues raised both by the pandemic and which form part of our ongoing response, as well as those that occurred prior to it, in order to further enhance our governance arrangements as contained in the Action Plan that underpins this Statement. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review and will monitor their implementation and operation during 2021/22 in conjunction with the Corporate Governance & Audit Committee ahead of next year's review.

Signed:



Cllr. Shabir Pandor, Leader of the Council



Jacqui Gedman, Chief Executive

Coronavirus Conclusion

The response to Coronavirus focussed on a number of key priorities – promoting public safety and saving lives, managing business continuity, maintaining support and safeguarding the most vulnerable and providing a resilient response within the region.

Since March 2020, the way the Council operates and its governance arrangements have changed significantly but its' key objectives and commitment to the principles in the Local Code of Corporate Governance have remained the unwavering cornerstone to its activities and as such have remained fit for purpose in these unprecedented times.

Business continuity plans helped manage the initial phase of the response immediately prior to and following the first lockdown in March 2020 to ensure key public services and business critical activities continued in accordance with current and quickly changing Public Health England and Government advice. The local Resilience Forum provided guidance and a lead on such matters too during this period, enabling the Council as with other member bodies to determine their preferred course of action with Cabinet and the Executive Team providing strategic leadership and support.

The Coronavirus (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) Regulations 2020 came into force on 4 April 2020. This put in place the ability for Councils to hold meetings virtually, so long as they meet certain criteria specified in the Regulations. The first virtual meeting of the Cabinet took place on 1 May 2020 at which the Chief Executive reported back on the decisions she had taken in the interim, as required by the Constitution. The Regulations also enabled deferment of the 2020 Annual General Meeting. The Regulations and virtual meetings applied up until 6 May 2021, thereafter meetings have been held in person.

As with all other organisations, the coronavirus outbreak represents a unique and unprecedented set of challenges to the Council as a service provider, community leader, partner and an employer. The fundamental challenge to established ways of working and global nature of the pandemic has necessarily raised a number of Issues for the Council but to date we have successfully delivered upon our key objectives within the principles of our governance arrangements.

Coronavirus related Significant Governance Issues

At some future point a full review including recovery will be conducted of the Council's response and learning points for the future but because of the protracted nature of the pandemic it remains too early to say with sufficient confidence which, if any, particular Issues would merit inclusion in this Statement because of their impact on the Council's key objectives, as it will require a significant period of time to assess the impact overall. That being the case, debriefs on elements of the response have been undertaken, including business continuity (first wave), excess deaths, surge testing and PPE procurement.

The pandemic has changed the working life of almost everyone and the way we learn to live and work in the future will lead to some fundamental changes which create significant risks,

most notably a skill and knowledge gap from the accelerated retirement of those that decide permanent working from home is not their preference. This applies equally to our partners and contractors too.

More specifically the diversion of key staff to managing the pandemic has already impacted upon the delivery of some important areas of responsibility, food hygiene inspection being a notable case in point, leading to a backlog in meeting statutory responsibilities and keeping residents safe and healthy.

Wider Significant Governance Issues during 2020/21

The annual review process that has been possible has identified and evaluated both ongoing and new Issues and if any of these meets one or more of the following criteria suggested by CIPFA / SOLACE it is regarded as Significant and included in this Statement:

- ☐ it undermines / threatens the achievement of organisational objectives (A)
- ☐ it is a significant failure to meet the principles (and sub-principles) of good Governance (B)
- ☐ it is an area of significant concern to an inspector, external audit or regulator (C)
- ☐ the head of internal audit, one of the statutory officers or the corporate governance & audit committee has recommended it be included (D)
- ☐ it is an issue of public or stakeholder concern (E)
- ☐ it is an issue that cuts across the organisation and requires cooperation to address it (F)

Progress with the Issues in last year's Statement

The 2019/20 Statement unusually covered the period up to January 2021 due to the elongation of the time afforded to the external auditor to complete their work before the Accounts were signed off. Added to the focus of corporate managers being to address the issues arising due to the pandemic, this timing has understandably resulted in somewhat of a pause in the planned response to addressing the majority of the Issues raised last year.

We have noted in previous Statements that many Issues are of a complex nature, sometimes not solely entirely under the Council's direct control, and these often take longer than one year to address and embed. Indeed a core are likely to feature in one form or another for a longer period, albeit that various parts of each Issue can be resolved during the year and where appropriate this has been reflected in what remains to be done, as shown in the table over the page.

Issue / Inclusion Criteria	Progress in 2020/21	Further Action in 2021/22
<p>Further strengthen the Corporate Plan with improved linkages to both revenue and capital resource allocation and performance measures.</p> <p>(A, B, F)</p>	<p>The new Corporate Plan, <i>Our Council Plan 2020/21</i>, is intended as a roadmap for recovery in Kirklees. At its heart is a determination to build a fairer and more equal borough for people to live, work and grow up in. The Plan retains its focus on outcomes for people but elevates our ambition and puts an extra focus on breaking down the barriers that have previously prevented people from sharing in the benefits of plans like this. Overseen by a new Inclusion Commission, we will make sure our focus on tackling inequalities delivers for everyone in Kirklees.</p> <p>Both the Medium Term Financial Plan 2020-23 (revenue) and Capital Plan (2020-25) are well aligned to Corporate Plan ambition and priorities. Reviewing budget setting arrangements for 2019/20 and beyond regarding outcome based budgeting was acknowledged to be a work in progress as regards the most recent budget round.</p> <p>A revised quarterly performance monitoring system has been introduced and is being embedded.</p>	<p>The corporate planning process is likely to include a substantial revision to reflect the impact on the organisation and its finances consequent to Coronavirus.</p> <p>To develop a more robust, intelligence-led performance management mechanism across the organisation aligned with the annual planning cycle to drive resource allocation decisions that are better aligned to priority outcomes and to monitor their delivery.</p> <p>The performance monitoring system needs embedding for both business critical indicators and other service measures used, including the development of more relevant qualitative indicators alongside quantitative ones to better measure outcomes and impacts. Consideration is also being given to how service planning can be more closely aligned with this mechanism.</p> <p>The next Corporate Plan also needs to take account of developmental issues included in the Peer Review Action Plan from 2019/20 with an aligned Communications Strategy and engagement of all members, the development of both of which has been impacted by other organisation priorities in responding to the pandemic.</p>

Issue / Inclusion Criteria	Progress in 2020/21	Further Action in 2021/22
<p>Manage delivery of the Council's Transformation Activities.</p> <p>(A, F)</p>	<p>The Transformation Team clarified and enhanced its offer to respond to changing demands for a mix of robust project management, innovative business change skills and the ability to challenge and offer new insights.</p> <p>Transformation is now focused on the ongoing development and sustainability of public services, which means continuing change and innovation. It is less driven by the savings targets that will come through services and overall budget monitoring.</p>	<p>The Council's priority transformation programmes, to which transformation resources are allocated, have been updated to reflect known areas of need and will be checked and adjusted where necessary year by year, and in no priority are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Waste Transformation 2. Climate Change 3. Assets Transformation 4. SEND Transformation 5. The ongoing development of a Modern Organisation (i.e. ensuring all services reflect the priorities of the organisation and are 'fit for purpose' during the long-term recovery of the district beyond Covid, supported by effective enabling functions) 6. Tackling Inequalities 7. Place Based Working 8. Health and Social Care Integration 9. Residential Care Market 10. Access to Services <p>The focus is now on ensuring these priorities are further shaped and delivered over the coming years. They may be further amended as a consequence of learning from coronavirus.</p>
<p>Strengthen and develop Partnership Governance and new relationships</p> <p>(A, B, F)</p>	<p>A light touch governance review has been completed and is leading to more solid governance structures for the Partnership Executive: a revised executive arrangement is in place with themed meetings throughout the year that draw the partner together on a topic basis. During the pandemic, partnership governance has been</p>	<p>Even prior to the pandemic there was still scope to increase the effectiveness of some partnership arrangements and for changes made recently to become embedded. This need now has a sharpened focus than ever before because of the heightened risks faced with associated parties/partnerships - Kirklees Stadium Development Limited</p>

Issue / Inclusion Criteria	Progress in 2020/21	Further Action in 2021/22
	<p>strengthened through more frequent executive meetings, focusing on response and recovery.</p> <p>KNH has returned to Council control and a transition period began.</p> <p>The Children's Partnership Board arrangements have been re-launched.</p> <p>Uncertainties have arisen associated with changed ways of working with newly emerging / re-shaped anchor /strategic partnerships and our influence in helping shape these from a strategic partnership /influencing /integration perspective, especially regional funders and partners, including the West Yorkshire Mayor and Combined Authority Competitive bidding is one such case and also the impact on Integrated Care Plans and the role of the Health & Wellbeing Board.</p>	<p>and KAL. Also, Kirklees Community Association is now in view for governance reasons.</p> <p>The transition period will help ensure KNH is fully aligned with the Council's priorities and plans and its new governance arrangements are well embedded over the next twelve months.</p> <p>Develop strong working relationships with the West Yorkshire Mayor and others, apply best practice and iterative learning, aligned to clear and consistent communications.</p>
<p>Continue to Strengthen Risk Management</p> <p>(A, B, D, F)</p>	<p>A new Strategy & a Risk Panel was established.</p> <p>The Corporate Matrix has been regularly updated along with an emerging risk report, and this has been discussed by the Executive Team and Leadership Management Team. The CGAC has commented positively on the Corporate Matrix but expressed concerns about the quality and consistency of the directorate based risk management processes.</p>	<p>This still needs more work, as the quality of directorate based risk arrangements requires improvement, as does risk elevation.</p>

Issue / Inclusion Criteria	Progress in 2020/21	Further Action in 2021/22
<p>Continue to improve the manager skill base and capacity.</p> <p>(A, F)</p>	<p>The People Strategy programme of work has been refreshed and now focuses on 4 clear outcomes: Healthy and Well People; An Inclusive Employer of Choice; Highly Skilled, Flexible and Engaged People; and Effective and Compassionate Leadership.</p> <p>As part of this programme of work, there is a focus on improving manager capacity and skill base through effective workforce planning and a programme of learning and development.</p> <p>In 2020, a new leadership and management pathway was launched with targeted development for BAME colleagues at levels 3 and 5. Governance of the programme is through Modern Organisation Board, with 'check and challenge' via a cross-organisational steering group.</p>	<p>As part of the programme of work, the leadership and management pathway will be further developed to encompass level 7 learning and development, including targeted development for under-represented groups. Working in collaboration with the LGA, there is also a project underway to improve workforce planning, in particular to build resilience in the organisation and improve career pathways through the organisation. We will also be further embedding our restorative approach to leadership and continue to promote coaching and mentoring to improve manager skill base.</p> <p>The pandemic has helped create key skill shortages in a number of areas nationally that are becoming apparent across Service areas, such as HGV & LGV drivers. The impact of this will require careful monitoring and an appropriate response as the situation develops</p>
<p>School Governance arrangements need review and improvement.</p> <p>(D, E)</p>	<p>A Schools Causing Concern Group chaired by the Service Director identifies and shares issues for remediation.</p>	<p>Look to understand what is causing a (historically) large number of complaints about governance and management in schools, and look to identify potential solutions.</p>
<p>Governance arrangements need developing to identify and manage issues arising from historically different</p>	<p>Work has commenced to develop a corporate approach that satisfies initial management of such issues as they emerge through the corporate risk management process via the Risk Panel and these are flagged</p>	<p>To embed and disseminate the learning following the identification and response of such issues on a corporate basis to consolidate overall resilience.</p>

Issue / Inclusion Criteria	Progress in 2020/21	Further Action in 2021/22
service delivery. To learn from the lessons arising and make sure the issues are addressed.	<p>up to ET and enable organisational reflection and learning with a view to being less insular and to draw upon wider external assurances and develop an assurance backed culture.</p> <p>Where issues such as historically poor safeguarding, health and safety or HR practices are identified, checking will be undertaken to ensure that the same practices are not still in operation and to take appropriate action.</p>	
<p>Continue to develop and strengthen the governance arrangements for decision-making and place-based working, including greater clarity to the roles and responsibilities of Members and officers, including greater congruence between officer and member structures (as per Peer Review).</p> <p>(A, B & C)</p>	<p>Built upon the progress achieved since the Peer Review.</p> <p>Developed new proposals around governance and decision-making arrangements.</p> <p>Used the re-designed profile of the councillor role as a basis for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the full review of the Members' Allowances Scheme in the summer of 2021; and - how we improve support for councillors to facilitate more effective working with officers in the context of putting councillors at the heart of what we do. 	<p>Ongoing consolidation of governance arrangements identified last year to enhance the Constitution, in particular working with Members to look at some of the issues that came from the consultation and make any changes that may be required to the current Standards process. The Council is also, alongside that, considering the adoption of the LGA Model Code of Conduct.</p> <p>Consideration of proposals to review options around committee structures.</p> <p>Implementation of the reviews.</p>

Issue / Inclusion Criteria	Progress in 2020/21	Further Action in 2021/22
<p>Address the health and safety issues raised in connection with housing properties and the complete buildings portfolio, ensuring that management and operational arrangements provide for the health and safety of all Council tenants, employees and residents.</p> <p>(C, D, E)</p>	<p>Began implementation of the recommendations in the agreed Action Plan as monitored by the Service Director and Cabinet.</p> <p>Established an Assurance Board in connection with all such issues affecting the complete Council buildings portfolio.</p> <p>However, the pandemic has worsened the overall environment such that ensuring compliance in a timely manner from technically competent staff has become considerably more difficult due to national issues in the employment market in this sector.</p>	<p>Continue to deliver the agreed recommendations begun last year.</p>
<p>Ensure sufficient organisational resilience to resist the type of failings experienced in the local authority sector and beyond, by the formulation of a corporate Assurance Framework and culture in connection with all key and emerging business risks.</p> <p>(All)</p>	<p>The impact of the pandemic and necessary input of key staff into other corporate priorities has meant planned progress in this area has had to be deferred. One example of this is the review of good and sustainable financial management in the Council that Internal Audit were commissioned to undertake based upon best practice in CIPFA's Financial Management Code and report back to CGAC for initial assessment.</p> <p>ET has given initial consideration to lessons to be learned from corporate failures elsewhere, as described in various auditor public interest reports.</p>	<p>Compile all the various sources of assurance and determine how they inter-relate to one another.</p> <p>Manage any areas about which there are gaps or where assurance needs strengthening.</p> <p>Ensure issues are responded to appropriately and actions are delivered.</p> <p>Complete the financial sustainability review as per the revised timescale.</p> <p>Enhance the corporate governance framework as described above.</p>

Issue / Inclusion Criteria	Progress in 2020/21	Further Action in 2021/22
<p>Accelerate the response to the Climate Change Emergency Declaration.</p> <p>(A, E, F)</p>	<p>The Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 because we all must take urgent action to improve and protect our environment. Our vision is to make Kirklees completely carbon neutral by 2038.</p> <p>The Climate Change Working Party oversees Phase 1 actions including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting a carbon budget • Free parking for low emission vehicles • Considering the environmental impact in decision making • Creating a Climate Commission and Green Charter • Developing a detailed and ambitious action plan for Phase 2 to achieve the 2038 target. 	<p>Continue to work towards the Phase 1 Actions, acknowledging the 2021 report of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, including development of an electric vehicle fleet, widening the availability of vehicle charging points.</p>
<p>Develop a more strategic corporate management of the investigation and treatment of cases of suspected fraud & corruption.</p> <p>(D)</p>	<p>This is another area where progress has been impaired by resourcing corporate priorities.</p>	<p>Refresh the Corporate Strategy engaging Members and CGAC in particular and focus management and resources on key risk areas.</p>

New Issues

The annual review of the effectiveness of our governance arrangements has identified areas of heightened concern, risk, or significant uncertainty that require a corporate response. Where appropriate, these matters have been incorporated into exiting or slightly refocussed Issues brought forward from last year's Statement. Organisational resilience is such a cross cutting theme of note. One area where appropriate distinct focus is required though is described below.

Issue	Planned Action
<p>Staff wellbeing.</p> <p>The wellbeing of all staff is a vital part of being able to deliver the planned outcomes for the Council. Building and maintaining a healthy and well employee base is a key part of the existing People Strategy.</p> <p>However, the pandemic impact has been such that almost everyone has been affected personally, physically and emotionally, in addition to experiencing the effects arising from the effort and commitment that has been necessary to continue to deliver front-line services in very difficult circumstances, and the consequences of practical changes from adapting flexibly to new roles and tasks and to working from home in different ways.</p> <p>One particular aspect, given the demographic profile of the workforce, is a potential knowledge and skills gap arising from the likelihood of accelerated retirement amongst those who decide new ways of working are not for them, together with a recognition of the need for staff recuperation and recovery.</p>	<p>Recovery planning is underway including various sources of support, coupled with clear expectations and effective leadership and management.</p> <p>Implementation of the relevant parts of the People Strategy as described above.</p>

A detailed Action Plan sits behind this summary and the Executive Team and Corporate Governance & Audit Committee will monitor progress quarterly during 2021/22.

Statement Scope

Kirklees Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised.

Kirklees Council has a Local Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA / SOLACE framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government 2016*. A copy of the Code is available from the Monitoring Officer. The current version following annual review can be found at

<https://www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/council-and-democracy.aspx#your-council>

This Statement explains how the Council has complied with the Code during 2020/21 and up to the date that the Statement of Accounts was approved and thus meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, as revised by the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2020. It provides assurance about the Council's governance framework, including the other entities in the Group Accounts, a wholly owned subsidiary during 2020/21, which has since been returned to Council control, Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing Limited and a joint venture, Kirklees Stadium Development Limited, to enable readers of the consolidated Accounts to be satisfied that proper arrangements are in place to govern spending and safeguard assets. Where specific improvements and/ actions are ongoing or needed, brief information is provided about the key issues and the main areas of work that have been progressed during 2020/21. A more detailed Action Plan sits behind this summary.

The purpose of the governance framework

Corporate governance is a phrase used to describe how organisations direct and control what they do. For local authorities this also includes how a Council relates to the communities that it serves. The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, culture and values by which the Council is directed and controlled and its' activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads its communities. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its' strategic objectives as set out in the Corporate Plan and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate services and value for money.

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

The key parts of the governance framework

- a Local Code of Corporate Governance overseen by the Service Director Legal, Governance & Commissioning and the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee, to assess operational practice and behaviour, and prepare this Statement.
- a Council Constitution.
- a Leader and Cabinet model of governance, supplemented by decisions of the Chief Executive March – May 2020 under the emergency powers of Part 3.7 of the Constitution and Strategic Directors under the Officer Scheme of Delegation. Cabinet meetings have been held virtually since 1 May in accordance with new legislation. Virtual meetings were rolled out to enable other Committees to meet similarly as soon as was possible.
- a corporate governance, audit and scrutiny process as set out in the Constitution,
- statutory officer roles performed by the Chief Executive as Head of Paid Service, the Service Director Legal, Governance & Commissioning as Monitoring Officer and the Service Director Finance as Section 151 Officer. The S151 Officer is a professionally qualified accountant and reports directly on financial matters to the Chief Executive as a member of the Executive Team (ET).
- a Corporate Plan that outlines how officers will seek to run the Council to meet our community commitments and objectives
- oversight and delivery of the Council Transformation Programme, including a number of officer boards as described in the Constitution, notably the Children's Board
- a Monitoring Officer who has responsibility for the Constitution and ensuring the legality of Council actions and decision making.
- a S151 Officer who has responsibility for ensuring that the financial management arrangements conform with all of the governance requirements of the five principles that define the core activities and behaviours that belong to the role in the CIPFA *Statement on The Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Authorities (2014)*.
- codes of conduct defining the standards of behaviour for Members and employees
- an Anti-Fraud & Anti-Corruption Policy
- a Risk Management Strategy
- systems of financial and business internal control
- an internal audit section, that is compliant with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and Code of Ethics
- whistle blowing arrangements
- a complaints system for residents and service users
- business continuity arrangements
- a senior manager to act as the Caldicott Guardian to protect the confidentiality of patient and service-user information
- a Data Protection Officer reporting directly to the Chief Executive and a Senior Information Risk Officer
- arrangements to manage other parts of the Council's Group. The S151 Officer monitors and reports on the financial effectiveness of the subsidiary and joint venture companies, whose accounts are subject to external audit.
- A Covid Recovery Framework using the strong foundations established during lockdown to help the Council come back stronger across a themed recovery programme supported by an Outbreak Control Plan approved by the local Health Protection Board.

2020/21 Review of effectiveness

Kirklees Council has a legal responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework. The review is informed by a number of sources including the work of the executive managers, the Head of Audit & Risk's annual report, the external auditor and other review agencies and inspectorates and Member Committees. The Council has four bodies / committees jointly responsible for monitoring and reviewing governance. These are:

- ☐ the Executive (Cabinet);
- ☐ the Corporate Governance & Audit Committee;
- ☐ the Overview & Scrutiny Committee; and
- ☐ the Standards Committee.

The main parts of the review process are described below, although due to the timing of the Coronavirus outbreak some sources of assurance used are in interim or draft version pending return to more normal working. A further assessment will be made later in the year before finalising the Statement.

1. Annual Review of effectiveness of the system of internal control

In accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS), the CGAC approved the annual review of the effectiveness of its system of internal control and internal audit. The Head of Audit & Risk's self-assessment of current compliance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards & Code of Ethics and revised CIPFA Local Government Application Note 2019, concluded that overall Internal Audit does conform to these Standards and an Action Plan has been agreed to further improve compliance and monitor progress with this objective, and this will be monitored by the CGAC.

2. Head of Audit and Risk's Annual Assurance Opinion

The unique circumstances faced during the year necessarily reduced both the planned programme of internal audit work and the scope of that which could be undertaken given that all staff were working at home during this entire time. Nevertheless, a revised plan of key areas from which assurance was required was devised mid-year and approved by CGAC. In addition Directors were asked to provide confirmation from their viewpoint via completion of Assurance Statements that key operations and controls remained intact.

Both the conclusions as expressed in the opinion set produced from the audits undertaken and the returns received from Directors were sufficient to conclude that other than in respect of a small number of significant control issues that have arisen during the year, the Head of Audit and Risk has provided assurance that overall the Council's systems of governance, risk management and internal control are generally sound and operate reasonably consistently across Services.

3. External Auditor's Review

During the year the External Auditor's Annual Report included

- an unqualified opinion on the Council's 2019/20 financial statements; and
- an unqualified value for money conclusion, stating that we have made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in our use of resources.

4. Corporate Governance & Audit Committee (CGAC)

The Committee considered and approved an updated Local Code of Corporate Governance at its meeting in March 2020.

During 2020/21 the CGAC reviewed a number of aspects of the Council's governance arrangements and noted or approved revisions or made recommendations to Council as appropriate, arguably most notably concerning the new West Yorkshire Mayoralty.

CGAC also received assurance from various 2019/20 annual reports such as health and safety, emergency planning and business continuity, information governance and customer corporate standards on complaint handling, and a review of the Ombudsman and Third Stage Complaints received, together with details of the Whistleblowing Complaints that have been received.

Recognising the need to ensure that both new and existing members of the Committee have the appropriate support and skills to carry out their role, training sessions are provided at various intervals and this year included treasury management.

5. Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee

During 2020/21 the Committee and its four Panels reviewed a number of aspects of the Council's governance arrangements and key issues faced and strategies and responses to manage these, including devolution in West Yorkshire, Our Council Plan, Cohesion, Climate Change, Domestic Violence Strategy Update and Place Partnerships working, in addition to the response to Covid-19.

6. Standards Committee

During the year the Committee reviewed various aspects of Member conduct, and received an update on progress in implementing the recommendations locally in the report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life. The Committee considered the CSPL recommendations in 2019 and concluded that on the whole the Council met with the recommendations. At the beginning of this calendar year the Council consulted about the standards process and had an excellent response. As a result of the response the Council will be working with members to look at some of the issues that came from the consultation and make any changes that may be required to the current Standards process. The Council is also, alongside that, considering the adoption of the LGA Model Code of Conduct.

7. Role of the Chief Financial Officer

The role of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) continues to reflect the governance arrangements set out in the CIPFA Statement, which are required to ensure the CFO is

able to operate effectively and perform their core duties as part of the review of the Constitution. The Council's financial management arrangements continue to fully conform to those set out in the Statement.

The Council and CFO is working towards compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code and has commissioned Internal Audit to assess the body of evidence that exists to document this and confirm what further progress is needed.

8 External Inspections & Peer Reviews

Action Plan from Local Government Association Corporate Peer Review Challenge

The Challenge took place during July 2019 and the outcome was largely positive. It did provide a series of key recommendations and an Action Plan was compiled to manage the response, which includes development issues being managed through the new Corporate Plan and governance ones through the Action Plan for this Statement, for example those linked to the Democracy Commission have been completed.

9 Officer Governance

Officer Boards as prescribed in the Constitution have continued to drive forward the Transformation Programme within the context of the Medium Term Financial Plan with strategic oversight from the Executive Team and escalation of appropriate issues. These arrangements are subject to both Cabinet and Scrutiny oversight.

10 Significant Partnerships

Partnerships range from joint venture partnerships, thematic partnerships and their subsidiaries to key contractual agreements managing substantial amounts of public money. The main contact officer for each Partnership is responsible for assessment of the governance arrangements and providing details of any significant changes to the membership and circumstances of the partnership. This information is used by senior officers of the Council to assess the potential risk that the partnership presents to the reputation or financial standing of the Council. The Council is continuing to work on a number of areas where arrangements need to be revised to strengthen and embed the governance framework, as identified in the Action Plan for this Statement.

11 Director of Public Health / Emergency Planning

As the coronavirus outbreak escalated during March 2020, the risk and potential impact on the Council and the whole of Kirklees was assessed and the scale and magnitude of the issues raised came into focus. Advice and guidance building on that from Public Health England has continued apace ever since. Well-established multi-agency relationships prior to the pandemic enabled the timely activation of command and control structures and the Kirklees response with the sharing of plans and arrangements was well received regionally. Government departments have recognised the Council as an excellent partner as an enhanced response area.

12 Monitoring Officer / Senior Information Risk Owner

Reviewed information governance and security matters as Chair of the Information Governance Board within the context of an internal review of the Board's terms of reference and increasing focus on an enabling and supportive role, as well as wider assurance concerning organisational governance and compliance with the Constitution.