

Cardiff Council Draft Annual Governance Statement 2020/21



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Scope of Responsibility

1. Cardiff Council (the Council) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, including arrangements for the management of risk.
2. The Council is responsible for the Cardiff Harbour Authority. The Council is also the Administering Authority for the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Pension Fund (the Pension Fund) and Cardiff Port Health Authority (CPHA), and is the Accountable Body for the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) City Deal. The governance arrangements detailed in this Annual Governance Statement (AGS) are documented in consideration of the Council's areas of responsibility, and the extent to which the Council is charged with governance.
3. The Council has adopted the 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' framework, developed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE). This statement explains how the Council has complied with the Governance Framework and meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014, as amended by the Accounts and Audit (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2018.
4. Cardiff Council has three wholly owned subsidiary companies which traded in 2020/21, one of which Cardiff City Transport Services Ltd. (Cardiff Bus) underwent changes in governance arrangements which are set out in paragraph 74. The Council also has an interest in a special purpose vehicle (CSC Foundry Limited) which is governed by a Joint Committee for the CCR City Deal.

The Purpose of the Governance Framework

5. The Governance Framework comprises the systems, processes, culture and values by which the Council is directed, controlled, and the means through which it accounts to, engages with, and leads the community. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services. The Council's Constitution sets out how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed through rules, codes of practice and protocols.
6. The system of internal control is a significant part of the framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives but is based on an ongoing process to identify, prioritise and appropriately manage risk.
7. The Code of Corporate Governance documents how we apply the principles of good governance (as summarised in Section 4 of the AGS – Assessment

Process and Summary). This Code was approved at the Constitution Committee on 11th February 2019 and is included in the Council's Constitution.

The Governance Framework

8. The Framework comprises two core principles and five supporting principles. Principles A and B run through principles C to G but good governance is dynamic, and the Council as a whole is committed to improving governance on a continuing basis through a process of evaluation and review.

Core principles:

- a. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law
 - b. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
- Supporting Principles:

Supporting principles

- c. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits
- d. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes
- e. Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it
- f. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management
- g. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability

Assessment Process and Summary

9. The AGS summarises the assessment of governance against the governance framework and comprises three elements:
- 1) Statements from Senior Management, the Audit Manager and the Governance and Audit Committee (the 'Audit Committee' was renamed 'Governance and Audit Committee' following the financial year-end in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. Its opinion was provided following the financial year-end)
 - 2) Supporting analysis mapped to the core and supporting good governance principles that provides a judgement that is based on supporting information and evidence
 - 3) A Senior Management judgement of the Council's significant governance issues
10. These three elements when taken together represent the assessment of governance, through the perspectives of the Senior Management Team (SMT) and the independent opinions of the Internal Audit Manager and the

Governance and Audit Committee based on their respective programmes of work and an assessment of the system of internal control.

11. For further information and detail, supporting information is mapped to the governance framework principles (a-g) within the AGS, and followed by an open disclosure from the SMT of the significant governance issues affecting the organisation as summary actions to take forward and address.
12. The diagram in fig. 1 sets out the components of this assessment.

Fig.1



Assurance Statements

13. The following statements are made at the year-end, upon consideration of the performance information, governance disclosures and audit and regulatory report findings from assessors both internal and external to the Council.

Senior Management Statement

14. As a Senior Management Team we have continued to apply a self-assessment exercise as a primary means of measuring our delivery of good governance, and identifying issues for improvement. The assessment exercise has considered the impact of the pandemic on the areas of governance which has seen as a response more frequent meetings of Senior Management Team. The early onset of the year followed an incident management regime with Senior management team meeting on a daily basis. By July, the SMT meetings were reduced to three times a week with a focus on business activities as well as incident management of the latter part of the year saw the meetings reduce to two times a week but with the flexibility to meet as and when required. The focus of these meetings throughout the year has been to consider the Council's

response to the crisis, ensure resources are used appropriately, outcomes delivered and controls remain in place or amended to reflect the environment of the time.

15. Since March 2020, the attention of Senior Officers has been firmly focussed on the Council's response to the crisis and upholding effective communication, decision making and control. The pandemic has impacted on services with some having to seek different means to deliver services whilst some services have had to shut down for most of the year. Health and Safety has been the main priority for both those who deliver and receive services from the Council.
16. The Senior Management Team has engaged with the self-assessment assurance process for 2020/21. The Senior Management Team took the opportunity to review the 2020/21 half yearly and end of year returns, and considered the body of work delivered over the last six months, including a reflection on the continued response of the Council to the pandemic.
17. The Senior Management Team considers that the 2020/21 end of year Senior Management Assurance Statement offers a true and fair reflection of the governance maturity of the Council for the year overall. This end of year assessment was based on the governance maturity which we could evidence within each Directorate against a series of assurance statements. Accordingly, the Senior Management Team considers that the Council is approaching strong application of good governance across the assurance areas, with some examples of embedded and limited in some assurance areas in some directorates. This assessment was based on a self-assessment using a 5-point rating system ranging from 'not in place', 'limited application', 'mixed application', 'strong application' to 'embedded'. The maturity assessment highlighted opportunities to further enhance the disciplines of performance and compliance whilst recognising the improved guidance on partnerships the detail of which is presented in the Annual Governance Statement Action Plan. It is recognised that where there are weaknesses identified then robust recovery procedures need to be put in place. The Senior Management Team recognises that whilst it is faced with very uncertain times there continues to be a need to prioritise actions for enhancement to enable strong evidence of application across all areas going forward.
18. In relation to the work of the Senior Management Team in 2020/21 we continued to collectively own the Corporate Risk Register, we reviewed all corporate risks quarterly, and monitored progress against the action plan of significant governance issues.
19. The Chief Executive continues to emphasise that areas of weakness need to be addressed. The last year has been one of great challenges and uncertainty and this will continue for the forthcoming months and there remains the importance of achieving consistent standards of governance and control across all directorates, and has reinforced these expectations to be monitored and managed through the senior management assurance statement process as we enter 2021/22.

Audit Manager Statement and Annual Opinion 2020/21

20. The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) state that the 'Chief Audit Executive must deliver an annual internal audit opinion and report that can be used by the organisation to inform its governance statement.' This must be based upon an objective assessment of the framework of governance, risk management and control. It must also include an evaluation of the adequacy and effectiveness of controls in responding to risks within the governance, operations and information systems.
21. This opinion has been prepared by the Audit Manager (Chief Audit Executive for the purpose of the PSIAS), based on the provisions of the PSIAS. In preparing and forming this opinion, a number of sources of information, assurance and insight have been taken into account, including:
- **Assurance Audit Engagements** – The risk-based annual audit plan has been delivered through an approach to maximise assurance and added value. The audit plan is responsive to risk and informed by audit information and existing assurances, information from Senior Management, monitoring of Council activity, strategy, risks, and wider assurance sources. The assurance audit plan included audits of new systems established as a result of the pandemic, and for all audits current risks, pressures and priorities informed the audit scope and the testing completed.
 - **Consultancy Audit Engagements** - In the context of the ongoing pandemic, consultation and engagement was provided in cases where there was a need for fundamental process change, a risk to resilience, the need to respond to a significant obligation or challenge as a result of the crisis, or a particular fraud or control risk. The majority of audit consultancy related to the design and application of sound controls in administration of Welsh Government grant and relief payments.
 - **Discussion with Senior Managers** – There has been quarterly relationship manager meetings with Directors or their representatives, regular Audit Manager attendance at Senior Management Team meetings where assurance items are considered, and regular meetings with the Chief Executive and Corporate Director Resources (Section 151 Officer).
 - **Risk & Governance Reviews** – Risk Registers and Senior Management Assurance Statements which underpin the Council's Annual Governance Statement are subject to regular audit review, and assurance audit engagements. Changes were reviewed, such as the governance regime applied as incident management arrangements were invoked in response to the pandemic.

22. Based on the programme of audit work undertaken to assess the framework and application of governance, risk management and control, the annual opinion for 2020/21 is **effective with opportunity for improvement**. This opinion is based on the delivery of a sufficient Audit Plan, and with an acknowledgment of the significant pressure on resources in the context of an ongoing pandemic in both demand and budgets, which has been managed through a resilient performance culture.
23. The audit opinion comprises assessments of governance, risk management and control, and includes an evaluation of the adequacy and effectiveness of controls in responding to risks within the governance, operations and information systems. In what has been an extraordinary year:
24. The normal governance regime changed during the pandemic as incident management arrangements were invoked. The new process was audited and allocated an 'effective' audit opinion, whereby an extended Senior Management Team operated as a Strategic Coordination Group, a command and control approach for cascading communications and decisions was applied, and processes for coherent and strategic reporting, decision-making, recording, and engagement were established.
25. The standard systems for corporate and directorate risk management were maintained during the year, but with COVID-19 specific risks additionally recorded, monitored and reported.
26. A number of new systems, processes and therefore controls needed to be established for the first time during 2020/21 in response to the crisis. Audit assurance and consultancy services targeted these areas during the year to provide a combination of advice, guidance, assurance and insight.
27. The Council was required to administer emergency relief and grant payments on behalf of the Welsh Government at pace. Over the year, the Council distributed a significant amount of grant and relief funding, and the Internal Audit and Investigation Teams advised management on the design of systems and counter-fraud checks in accordance with scheme requirements as part of a multidisciplinary team. Post assurance manual and data matching checks and analysis have not identified material cases of fraud or error to date in the context of the value of payments, although a number of case reviews are ongoing and, through participation in the National Fraud Initiative further data matching output is expected to generate cases for investigation in 2021/22.
28. The control environment for core financial systems, and for the majority of audits overall (73%), was considered as adequate, and allocated an opinion of 'effective' or 'effective with opportunity for improvement'. Twenty four audits have been given an audit opinion of 'insufficient with major improvement needed' recognising the need for attention to achieve sound controls, and one audit was given an 'unsatisfactory' opinion in respect of the control arrangements in administering British Council Grants.

29. Waste Management has been an area where a greater proportion of adverse audit opinions have been allocated in recent years. Through follow up audits this year the position is recognised to be gradually improving. Audit assurance and support continues to target and follow up on high risk areas.

Governance and Audit Committee Statement

30. Based on the evidence presented to the Audit Committee during 2020/21, it is the considered view of the Audit Committee (subsequently renamed Governance and Audit Committee) that the Council does have, for the most part, sound internal controls and governance arrangements in place. Strategic risks representing the true challenges facing the Council are captured and reviewed on a regular basis. Examples of where the Committee continues to have concerns, which will be incorporated into the Committee's Work Programme for 2021/22, include:

Budget Management

31. The Committee recognises the sustained financial pressure that the Council is under and notes that whilst the overall financial position was balanced, some particular directorates had significant overspends for which control improvements are needed, and management attention and actions are required in directorates to achieve budget savings proposals put forward. Budget management is particularly pertinent at this time given the pressures facing local authorities as they respond to the ongoing pandemic. This unprecedented environment follows a number of years in which the financial parameters within which the Council operates have been constrained.
32. Welsh Government support has been received this year to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on budgets, and there has been considerable officer attention and effort to record, verify and submit claims to recover eligible expenditure that has increased, and eligible income that has been lost during the crisis. The Committee is keen to observe effective arrangements for budget management and control once this funding ends. The Committee will carefully scrutinise budget management arrangements over the year to come, through observing the use of appropriate management controls and interventions, and continuing to reinforce expectations for delivery.

Internal Control

33. Assurance on compliance and control is essential. For a number of years there have been continued constraints on resources, together with a growing population and greater demand for public services. As the Council faces significant challenges in how it delivers services, it remains essential that internal controls are not neglected or impaired, and that strong controls operate throughout reformed processes and systems. Additionally, the pandemic has necessitated the adaptation of systems, and in some cases the design of new systems, in order to respond to new priorities. We have been advised of the substantial level of consultation, advice and guidance

provided by the Internal Audit and Investigation Teams to support management to design and uphold robust controls as they navigated new priorities and responsibilities. The Committee has noted the inherent risks associated with the Council's requirement to administer and distribute a significant amount of Welsh Government emergency funding at pace this year. It has been important for the Committee to receive relevant assurances during the year, and we have received briefings on the arrangements for up-front controls, post award assurance checks and the progression and outcomes of cases identified for investigation.

34. The Committee has invited senior officers to attend its meetings this year, to account for their delivery of good governance, risk management and control. In addition, the Committee has continued to receive the details of all Internal Audits completed, and the respective assurance ratings. This year we have observed isolated internal control gaps, and unsatisfactory audit opinions, but whilst the number of unsatisfactory Internal Audit opinions remain low, management must maintain sound systems of internal control and promptly address identified weaknesses.
35. There have been ongoing concerns about the robustness of controls in relation to the Waste Management function. In recent years, a wide-scale investigation into allegations of fraud was completed and disciplinary proceedings have concluded, whilst Police liaison is ongoing. We have received a confidential briefing following the financial year-end (as at 31 May 2021) referring to the disciplinary cases and outcomes, which links to the targeted work completed by Internal Audit to verify the operation of key controls, the management of risk and the overall control environment.
36. There has been a gradual and generally sustained improvement in the assurance opinions of Internal Audit in Waste Management over the financial year, although continued management attention and assurance are required. To support the importance of addressing audit reports we wrote to the Director of Economic Development who provided an account for the delivery of audit recommendations. We will consider the terms of reference for a post investigation review in the year ahead, to ensure lessons are learned.
37. The Committee receives a list of all Internal Audit recommendations raised and agreed, and visibility of updated management comments until the point of implementation. Whilst the Committee has an overall assurance of internal control, we continue to require officers to account for services or functions where internal control weaknesses have been identified. We continue to challenge any impairment in stewardship and control of public funds and assets, seeking prompt and proportionate management actions. The Committee has considered the Internal Audit Plan for 2021/22, and will closely monitor its progress and findings over the year ahead.

Financial Resilience (including Treasury Management)

38. In a position of constrained finances, the Committee will continue its consideration of the framework for financial decisions. The Committee has received updates on financial resilience as part of the finance updates and, in recent years has welcomed the independent assurance of the Council Treasury Management activities, by the Council's Treasury Management advisors.
39. The Governance and Audit Committee will continue to look to gain assurance of sound treasury management practices and strategy. This is vital work, which will both safeguard and deliver best value from the Council's borrowing and investments. The Committee has and will continue to seek assurance that the levels and profiles of investments and borrowing are appropriate and in line with the Treasury Management Practices, Strategy and Reports presented.

Schools Governance & Compliance

40. The Committee has raised concerns about governance and compliance matters in schools and school-traded services for some time, which are regularly responsible for a greater proportion of audit reports giving concern. Through overseeing the work of internal audit, we have observed that certain schools have not achieved a satisfactory level of stewardship and internal control.
41. In view of an ongoing need for regular school governance assurance, we arranged early engagement with the incoming Director of Education and Lifelong Learning after their appointment this year, and we discussed the arrangements for monitoring controls and progress of governance improvements in schools. We were advised that actions had been taken with new staff resources and responsibilities assigned to support coordination and improvements. We will monitor the position through the information and assurance we receive from Internal Audit, and we look forward to ongoing engagement with the new Director. This is with the understanding that the Governance and Audit Committee can request the attendance of those directly responsible for governance at an individual school level, to a Committee meeting, in the event that assurances are not considered as sufficient.
42. The Internal Audit Team adapted its approach to school audits this year. Fewer individual school audits were completed than usual, but all schools were engaged with through a Control Risk Self-Assessment (CRSA) exercise. Through this exercise, schools responded to a detailed set of questions on governance, risk, compliance and control and submitted a portfolio of evidence to support their assertions. We are advised that the Internal Audit team sampled 25% of Cardiff schools, through a desktop review, to provide a broad level of baseline assurance. Given the operational adjustments that schools needed to make throughout 2020/21, the approach to auditing schools has been pragmatic, and we welcome the outcomes of a range of individual school audits arranged for 2021/22.

43. The Committee acknowledges that the Council is not able to set rules for schools to adhere to regarding contracting matters, albeit advice can be offered on good practice. This area of interest remains a priority of the Committee and we continue to support the production and use of best practice guidance in schools to strengthen financial stewardship and control.
44. **ii) Governance Framework - Supporting Information**
- A. **Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.**
45. All Members and Officers in the Council are required to comply fully with Codes of Conduct as set out in the Constitution, which sets out the particular roles and responsibilities of Officers and Members and provides clarity on the interfaces between these roles. These include:
- Functions and subsections delegated to Officers
 - Members' Code of Conduct
 - Employees' Code of Conduct
 - Protocol on Member / Officer Relations
 - Cardiff Undertaking – signed by all Members upon election and underlines their duties to the City and its citizens
46. The Director of Governance and Legal Services is the Monitoring Officer, and has the specific duty to ensure that the Council, its Officers, and its Elected Councillors, maintain the highest standards of conduct in all they do based on Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, as amended by Schedule 5 paragraph 24 of the Local Government Act 2000.
47. The Standards and Ethics Committee has a responsibility to monitor and scrutinise the ethical standards of the Authority, its Members, employees and any associated providers of the Authority's services, and to report to the Council on any matters of concern. The Committee is chaired by an independent person and its role includes determining the outcome of complaints against Councillors and Co-opted Members and monitoring the Council's whistleblowing procedures.
48. In 2019/20, the Monitoring Officer was notified of a total of thirteen complaints relating to Member conduct. The Public Services Ombudsman has considered eleven of the complaints and determined that there was no evidence of a breach of the Code, so there would be no further investigation. The Council is awaiting the determination of the remaining complaint. One complaint was dealt with under the Local Resolution Protocol, and was resolved informally by the Monitoring Officer.
49. The Chair of the Standards and Ethics Committee presented the Committee's Annual Report 2019/20 to full Council in 28 January 2021 and outlined the work

of the Committee. The Chair made specific reference to the Members Survey findings and reminded Members of the guidance on social media. The Committee has agreed that presentation of its Annual Report to Council serves to promote Members' understanding of the important role of the Committee and its work; and that further Member briefings would be issued as and when required.

50. Members and Co-opted Members are required to register their personal interests in any business of the authority, and to comply with the rules on personal interests set out in the Members Code of Conduct. All personal interests disclosed by Members are published on the Council's website within the Member's profile information. The Council's Policy on Officers' Personal Interests & Secondary Employment requires all staff to disclose any personal interest which actually or potentially conflicts with their duties to the Council and all secondary employment. The policy sets out how all Council employees are obliged, under the Employees' Code of Conduct, to ensure that their private interests do not conflict with their public duties, and to comply with the Council's rules on the registration and declaration of financial and non-financial interests.
51. The Council's Corporate Values focus on fairness, openness and working together. The Council supports a culture of behaviour based on these values which guide how the long term vision of the Council is put into effect, as well as how Members and Officers deliver their day to day roles. Corporate and directorate planning and personal performance and development arrangements are aligned to delivering corporate values and priorities.
52. The Workforce Strategy and Employee Charter continues to ensure that there is alignment between the Council's vision and values and the Corporate Plan:
 - The Employee Charter sets out the expectations of all staff (employees, managers and senior managers) and has formed part of the objective setting process for personal reviews
 - The Workforce Strategy seeks to deliver outcomes for and with employees, within a culture that supports a flexible, skilled, engaged and diverse workforce
53. The Council takes fraud, corruption and maladministration very seriously supported by the following strategy and policies to prevent, and manage such occurrences
 - Counter-Fraud and Corruption Strategy
 - Financial Procedure Rules
 - Contract Standing Order and Procurement Rules
 - Whistleblowing Policy
 - Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy
 - Anti-Money Laundering Policy
 - ICT Security Policy
 - Data Protection Policy & Procedure
 - HR policies regarding investigation and discipline of staff

54. The Counter-Fraud and Corruption Strategy was introduced in July 2019 through a range of delivery methods such as e learning and location based workshops. In the region of 5000 staff and school governors have undertaken the course or attended face-to-face training / workshops. The Council is also supported by a range of policies, procedures and regulations, including those relating to Financial Control, Data Protection, Health & Safety, Equalities and IT Security.
55. During 2020/21, the Council has administered a significant amount of grant assistance associated with the pandemic on behalf of Welsh Government. A multidisciplinary team of colleagues from Business Rates, Audit, Accounts Payable, IT and Information Governance worked closely together in order to ensure that up-front controls were robust, anomalies were investigated and payments were reviewed. Post payment verification and assurance has included:
- Manual checks of entitlement / eligibility, using information submitted on the payment file, and open source information to confirm businesses were trading;
 - Participation in two data matching exercises for wider verification.
56. The Council has a Whistleblowing Policy in place through which staff and contractors are encouraged to speak out on misconduct or illegal behaviour within the organisation, which affects the public or other people (making a disclosure in the public interest). In 2020/21 a total of two whistleblowing cases have been reported to the Monitoring Officer.
57. The Corporate Director Resources has both overall responsibility for the financial administration (S151 Officer) and the information governance arrangements of the Council (SIRO). The Council's financial management arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government) which is set out in the CIPFA Financial Management Code.(2020).

B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

58. Through its Corporate Values, the Council outlines a commitment to being “open and honest about the difficult choices we face, and allowing people to have their say on what’s important to them and their communities.” Consultation, engagement and joint working with citizens are central to delivering this value and are outlined as follows.
59. The pandemic has led to all meetings being held remotely (virtually). Meetings have remained open to the public to attend except where confidential or exempt information is being discussed, as defined by the law. Full Council meetings continued to include a facility for public questions, and the Council’s Scrutiny Committees have virtually invited stakeholder contributions to their scrutiny programme, both through research and consultation exercises and through

direct access to Committees. During 2020/21, the number and types of Council and Committee meetings increased compared to 2019/20.

Webcasting Data			
Year	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Number of Meetings webcast	37	54	105
Number of Committees (Types) webcast	8	10	21
Total Hours Webcast	95:15:44	126:50:24	202:36:54
Live views	1674	1960	4594
Archive Views	3376	6909	10963
Total Views	5050	8869	15557

60. To support openness, the Council is focusing on proactively publishing data through the Open Data Strategy as part of the Council's Publication Scheme. It has adopted the UK government's approach to publishing data to a minimum of 3 stars out of a 5 star scale. This means data should be easily accessible and available to re-use as required (subject to terms outlined in the Open Government Licence). Data sets continue to be identified for publication.
61. There has been open debate and challenge on performance and risk management with quarterly reporting and review in Senior Management Team (SMT) and further challenge and oversight in Cabinet, Scrutiny and Audit Committee meetings. A Risk Management Steering Group is in place to develop and review risk management policy and accountability frameworks and to support SMT in identifying new and emerging corporate risks. An Assurance role has been developed within the SMT environment where the Chief Executive, and Directors discuss aspects of the assurance, for example risk management, performance management, outcomes and progress on audit recommendations made by internal and external auditors, bodies and regulators. This has increased the visibility and the connections between these assurance pieces. The meetings between the Chief Executive, Directors and Cabinet Members to agree actions arising from an open debate of performance and service delivery challenges have continued for the majority of 2020/21.
62. The public and other stakeholders are given the opportunity to tell the Council what they think about the services provided through the Council's Comments, Complaints and Compliments Policy. It reflects guidance given in the Welsh Government Model Policy and Guidance Paper for Handling Complaints, as well as guidance received from the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales and places a greater emphasis on a prompt resolution of complaints. Cabinet is informed annually of the number of complaints received.
63. Citizens, communities and partners continue to be engaged through a programme of citizen engagement, budget consultation, Ask Cardiff surveys

that seek opinions of a range of Quality of Life and Quality of Services statements. The output of these are used to inform proposals and decisions of priorities and planning for the provision of services. The participation levels for these engagement sessions do leave room for improvement and the Council will continue to build on participation numbers.

64. Regular meetings are held with institutional stakeholders to whom the Council is accountable, which include the Welsh Government and the Council's External Auditors (Audit Wales). Efforts have also been made to foster open and effective relationships between the County Council and the six Community Councils in Cardiff through a Community Councils Charter ("the Charter"). It reflects the model Charter issued by the Welsh Government in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and is based on equality of partnership between the two tiers of local government.
65. The Cardiff Public Services Board (PSB) represents a statutory partnership of public and voluntary sector organisations, chaired by the Leader of the Council to deliver the city's Wellbeing Plan. The Wellbeing Plan, which responds to the evidence from the Wellbeing Assessment, focusses on the areas of public service delivery which fundamentally require partnership working between public and community services, and the citizens of Cardiff. The Cardiff PSB is supported by partnership governance and delivery arrangements, reporting by exception into the PSB on a quarterly basis. Over the course of the pandemic, the Cardiff PSB has met on a more regular basis in order to lead a co-ordinated strategic response to critical issues across the city's public services. The annual report on the Wellbeing Plan was considered by the Cardiff PSB in September 2021.

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

66. To outline its ambitions for the city, the Council's Administration set out a policy programme for the five years from 2017 to 2022, entitled 'Capital Ambition'. These policy commitments were updated in January 2020. At the heart of Capital Ambition is the goal to create a greener, fairer and stronger capital city, tackling poverty and inequality in all its forms.
67. Capital Ambition identifies four priorities:
 - **Working for Cardiff:** Making sure that all our citizens can contribute to, and benefit from, the city's success.
 - **Working for Wales:** A successful Wales needs a successful capital city.
 - **Working for the Future:** Managing the city's growth in a sustainable way.
 - **Working for Public Services:** Making sure our public services are delivered efficiently, effectively and sustainably in the face of the rising demand and reducing budgets.
68. The Corporate Plan sets out how the Administration's priorities for Cardiff will be achieved, providing clarity on what will be delivered, and by when. In accordance with the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations

(Wales) Act 2015, the Corporate Plan sets out Cardiff's Well-being Objectives, the steps we will take to achieve them and how we will measure progress. The seven Well-being Objectives are:

- Cardiff is a great place to grow up
- Cardiff is a great place to grow older
- Supporting people out of poverty
- Safe, confident and empowered communities
- A capital city that works for Wales
- Cardiff grows in a resilient way
- Modernising and integrating our public services

69. The Council and Cardiff Public Services Board agreed the same Well-being Objectives, creating a clear link between the Corporate Plan and the Public Services Board's 'Well-being Plan 2018-23'. The 'Area Plan for Care and Support Needs 2018-23' produced by Cardiff & Vale Integrated Health & Social Care Partnership in accordance with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 also provides a more consistent approach to planning across a range of partners.
70. The Corporate Plan is a rolling three-year plan which is refreshed annually. The latest refresh was approved by Council in February 2021, informed by the consultation on budget proposals for 2021/22.
71. The delivery of the Corporate Plan is monitored through the Council's Performance Management Framework, which also allows for the Council's policy agenda to be refreshed and updated as necessary. This includes:
- Quarterly performance monitoring by Cabinet and Senior Management Team as part of its Assurance Board role. Progress is reported to Members alongside the Budget Monitoring.
 - Half-year and end-of-year strategic assessments of performance which include the Annual Well-Being Report to meet statutory performance reporting requirements. This includes all relevant performance data, as is informed by the Council's risk register and finance monitoring. The half-year assessment is considered by the Policy Review and Performance (PRAP) Scrutiny Committee before being received by Cabinet. The end-of-year assessment is considered by PRAP and Cabinet before being approved at a meeting of full Council.
72. An early draft of the Corporate Plan is considered by the PRAP Scrutiny Committee to help shape corporate policy.
73. Targets for the Key Performance Indicators are considered by the Performance Panel, which includes members of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee as well as the Chairs of all scrutiny committees.
74. Challenge sessions convened by the Leader, Chief Executive, relevant Cabinet Member(s) and Director(s) to sign-off Steps, Key Performance Indicators and Targets by Well-being Objective.

75. Consultation on the Council's 2020/21 budget proposals "Changes for Cardiff" ran from 19th December 2020 to 31st January 2021. The impact of the pandemic led to delays in Budget settlement from Welsh Government and the budget consultation for 2021/22 budget proposals was for the period 13 January 2021 to 10 February 2021. It is anticipated that the consultation timescale will be back to the pre-pandemic timeline in future budget settlements. As outlined under principle B of this AGS, ensuring openness and comprehensive engagement, a number of mechanisms were used to ensure the consultation was as accessible as possible. The consultation enabled members of the public to communicate their views on the budget proposals. It informed the final decisions on service changes, which focussed on delivering valued public services in the face of ongoing austerity.
76. Building on the approach to the Council's Budget Strategy over the last few years is key to planning for future years. The Council identified a budget gap of £84.9 million gap for the period 2022/23 to 2025/26. The outlook over the short term looks very challenging as services look to recover from the impact of the pandemic both in managing the increase in demand for some services and recovering lost income levels in other areas such as cultural venues and school catering. Looking further forward, the medium term is also a matter of concern and the Budget Report 2021/22 detailed the challenges in respect of the pandemic and other continued financial pressures with the difficulty of setting and realising year on year budget savings. In a normal year, a deliverable Budget Strategy will continue to be a key document to review but with the impact of the pandemic this will require even closer monitoring and a potential reshaping of the strategy as services evolve into their future shape and size.

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

77. All Cabinet and Council decisions taken by Members are supported by written reports from Officers on the legal, HR, property and financial implications arising from the decision. These reports are also required to outline the economic, social and environmental outcomes, the key risks and alternative courses of action which are available.
78. To meet requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the Council has published well-being objectives and a well-being statement as part of the development of the Corporate Plan. To ensure ongoing consideration of the sustainable development principle a focus has been placed on considering the 5 ways of working at the earliest stage of policy development. Policy development, across the organisation, is encouraged to consider:

- **Long term:** Defined as the trends that affect Cardiff both today and in the future.
- **Prevention:** Intervening earlier to prevent problems affecting citizens from occurring or worsening.
- **Involvement:** Engaging with citizens, particularly the most vulnerable in society.
- **Integration:** Working across boundaries to deliver Capital Ambition, the administration's policy agenda for the city.
- **Collaboration:** Working with others to have a greater impact.

79. The Council uses a number of sources of information to self-assess progress against Well-Being Objectives, including:

- **Progress against the Council's Key Performance Measures** – A number of performance measures are identified within the Council's Corporate Plan which help show the progress made in delivering the Well-Being Objectives. Where applicable, targets are set against these performance measures to demonstrate the desired level of achievement. Performance measures are assigned a RAG status: GREEN where the measure is on or above target, AMBER where the result is within 10% of the target and RED where the result is greater than 10% from the target.
- **Progress against the Steps in each Well-being Objective** – The Council included a number of Steps in the Corporate Plan to help achieve the Well-Being Objectives. Monitoring the progress of these Steps provides an understanding of what has been achieved and where further work is required.
- **Inspection Reports** – The Council is subject to a number of inspections from regulatory bodies including the Wales Audit Office, Estyn (Education) and the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW). Their findings help the Council to assess areas of strong performance, as well as identifying areas that require improvement.
- **Surveys and Citizen Feedback** – The annual Ask Cardiff survey, as well as more specific consultation and engagement work, provide residents an opportunity to share their views on a wide range of the Council's services. From this, areas of strong performance can be identified, along with those areas where Cardiff's citizens feel the Council needs to improve. Similarly, complaints and compliments provide a valuable source of information on performance, and the Annual Wellbeing Report is considered by Cabinet alongside the Annual Complaints Report.
- **Finance Monitoring** – The Council's Outturn Report and Budget Monitoring
- **Feedback from Scrutiny Committee and the Governance and Audit Committee** – The Council responds to the issues raised and recommendations made by Committees, which help inform performance improvement.
- **Risk** – The Council's Corporate and Directorate Risks are considered as part of a rounded view of performance, and the Annual Well-being Report is prepared and considered by Cabinet alongside the Council's Annual Corporate Risk Report. Reviewing this information assists the Council to

develop a balanced picture of the Council's improvement journey over the year.

80. By utilising this information, the Council can monitor progress but also identify areas where of improvement. The Council also has in place a robust performance and accountability regime which involves the wider political governance of the Council. In developing the self-assessment of performance, the following steps have been undertaken to ensure a full and balanced assessment:
- Directorate Analysis of Performance
 - Assurance Sessions convened by the Chief Executive with each Director
 - Assurance Sessions, convened by Cabinet, with the Chief Executive and the Council's Senior Management Team
 - Performance Panel Review, convened by the Chair of the Policy Review and Performance Committee, and involving the Chair of each of the Council's Scrutiny Committees.
 - Consideration by the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee
81. By utilising this information, the Council can identify areas of improvement and celebrate success, and also identify areas where performance may not have been as good, and therefore the areas that may require further attention.
82. There was an increase in the communication to staff from the Chief Executive during 2020/21 to ensure that staff were aware of the latest developments as the impact of the pandemic ebbed and flowed throughout the year. To ensure staff were consulted, and involved in decision making, various channels of communication were used including the Chief Executive's Update, Core Brief, Staff Information messages, the Staff App, and DigiGov (the Council's HR system).
83. Consultation on draft decisions resulting from budget proposals is robust and the impact on citizens and service users is an important consideration. The engagement of citizens has continued to be an important means of identifying and designing services to meet the needs and expectations of service users and citizens in Cardiff in the context of budgetary constraints. To support robust project based decision making, the Council has developed a Business Case template using the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) "Five Case Model", as recommended by HM Treasury for use by Public Sector bodies.
84. The Council's Budget Strategy is based on an incremental budgeting approach where budgets are informed to a greater extent by corporate priorities and the required future shape of the organisation. The themes for savings in the Budget Strategy for 2021/22 were categorised as Efficiencies, Income Generation and Service Change. This change was a response in order to generate a greater level of confidence in the delivery of savings with a focus on efficiency savings

being primarily in place in advance of the beginning of the Financial Year 2020/21. The onset of the pandemic has impacted on the success of any income generation proposals and work will be undertaken to implement alternative strategies.

85. Cardiff City Transport Services Ltd. (Cardiff Bus), one of the Council's wholly owned subsidiary companies determined to co-opt two independent non-executive directors with proven skills in governance and transport services. At its meeting of 28 January 2021, the council agreed that the two Independent Non-Executive Director appointments should be further extended for a 20-month period until October 2022 following the next council elections in May 2022 to enable both individuals to continue to contribute their respective skills and expertise to the work of the Board and Company during the continuing Covid-19 pandemic.
86. The Council has worked with the Company, Welsh Government and Trustees of the Pension scheme in order to provide resolutions to the challenges facing the company (i.e. Pension Scheme, long term business sustainability, Covid 19). At its meeting in October 2020 a package of financial viability support was agreed including injection of equity and becoming statutory employer for the Company pension scheme. It is recognised that the company board and new management team are making significant progress in light of significant impacts on the bus industry across Wales. As part of a review of governance of subsidiaries, an internal audit report has also been commissioned during 2021/22.

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

87. Decision making responsibilities and authority are clearly set out in the Council's Constitution. It documents the roles and relationships for decision making, between the Full Council, the Cabinet, Scrutiny and other Non-Executive Committees. It also details decisions delegated to senior officers through the different management tiers.
88. The Cabinet is the part of the Council which is responsible for most major decisions. The Cabinet is made up of the Leader elected by the Council, and up to nine other councillors whom he/she nominates for approval by the Council. The Cabinet has to make decisions which are in line with the Council's overall policies and budget. If it wishes to make a decision which is outside the budget or policy framework, this must be referred to the Council as a whole to decide.
89. The senior management structure of the Council was amended during 2020/21. This resulted in the creation of Two Director posts for Housing, Adults and Communities and Children's Services with the deletion of the Director of Social Services post and the deletion of two Assistant director posts for Adults and Children's Services respectively. The statutory responsibility for social Services was delegated to the Corporate Director of People and communities.

90. The Council aims to ensure that Members and Officers have the skills, knowledge and capacity to discharge their responsibilities effectively and recognises the importance of well trained, competent people. New Members attend an induction programme to introduce them to the Council and its values, objectives, policies and procedures. All new officers undertake the appropriate level of induction which includes a suite of mandatory e-learning training modules. Each mandatory training module has its own target date for full compliance. An in-house Cardiff Manager Programme represents a commitment to increasing the learning and development of staff with line management responsibilities. The programme continues to be offered more widely across the officer body without the requirement to sit a formal ILM level 3 qualification.
91. Performance is primarily evaluated through the Council's Personal Review process, which provides a framework for employees and managers to discuss work performance and behaviour as well as to identify learning and development needs. It enables employees to be clear about their roles, responsibilities and the behaviours expected of them whilst giving a clear understanding of how their job and efforts contribute to the Council's objectives. Member Personal Reviews are also in place to help them update their knowledge and learn new skills, where required, to be more effective in supporting their communities. The Cardiff Council Academy has developed a number of learning and development programmes and courses which can be accessed and delivered remotely.
92. The Council's Workforce Strategy has employee health and wellbeing as a priority. The Council continues to support the 'Time to Change' Pledge, has been recognised as a Disability Confident Employer, signed the Dying to Work Charter and achieved the Corporate Health Standard Silver Award.
93. The Council will publish the next Annual Wellbeing Report in July 2021, if approved by Council, in accordance with the requirements of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act. This provides a retrospective summary evaluation of performance for 2020/21 and identifies areas of focus moving forward.
94. Following its publication, the Audit Wales audited Cardiff Council's Improvement Plan in accordance with section 17 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and the WAO Code of Audit Practice. The Audit Certificate stated that "the Council has discharged its duties under section 15(6) to (9) of the Measure and has acted in accordance with Welsh Government guidance sufficiently to discharge its duties." Under the Measure, the Council is required to prepare and publish an Improvement Plan describing its plans to discharge its duties to:
- make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions
 - make arrangements to secure achievement of its improvement objectives; and

- make arrangements to exercise its functions so that any performance standard specified by Welsh Ministers is met.

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

95. Risk management is an integral part of strategic decision making, forming a key element of business planning, budget proposals, budget strategy, and programme and project considerations. A Corporate Risk Register (CRR) is maintained and reviewed by SMT each quarter to ensure it includes key risks to the corporate vision, objectives and priorities. A Corporate Risk Map has also been used throughout 2020/21 to provide a transparent representation of the status of corporate risks and to support a proportionate management response.
96. The Risk Management Strategy and Policy continued to be supported by a nominated Member Risk Champion, Senior Officer Risk Champion and a network of Directorate Risk Champions. This process is designed to ensure clear ownership of risks which are identified, reviewed and escalated systematically each financial quarter.
97. The Council's five standing Scrutiny Committees are designed to support the Cabinet in providing accessible, efficient and effective services for citizens. For the year 2020/21, the Scrutiny Committees were unable to meet for the period between April 2021 and June 2021. In order to maintain a level of scrutiny, a Covid 19 Scrutiny Panel was established comprising of the five Scrutiny Chairpersons. The Panel was responsible for scrutinising Council's functions as well as the work undertaken by the Cardiff Public Services Board and its impact on the local community. The Panel was put in place until 30 September 2021. This panel met three times between June and July and considered 10 items ranging from the response of the pandemic in respect to services such as homelessness and operational matters such as Schools Programme and Procurement frameworks.
98. All five Scrutiny Committees met in September 2021 with one committee trialling the remote meeting format at the end of July 2021. All meetings for the rest of the year were held remotely and there were 34 remote Scrutiny meetings held between September and March 2021.
99. Scrutiny Committees undertake pre-decision scrutiny, policy monitoring and review and launch in-depth inquiries to help the Cabinet develop and review policies and services. The majority of recommendations raised to Cabinet following Scrutiny Inquiries are fully accepted. A number of the Council's collaborative activities are governed by Joint Committees which can be identified on the Council's website.

100. The Council has robust arrangements for internal control which are set out within the three statements contained within this report from the Audit manager, Governance and Audit Committee and Senior Management respectively.
101. The pandemic led to a more frequent engagement on Health and Safety between appointed Elected Members, Union Representatives and relevant Council Officers. The focus of the Health and Safety forum was ensuring the most up to date guidance was available and implemented appropriately for each of the different services the Council delivers.

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

102. The Council aims for all reports for the public and other stakeholders to be written in a fair, balanced and understandable way. This is to achieve a balance between providing full and complete information to demonstrate clear transparency without being onerous or overly complex.
103. The Council also aims for information to be easy for the Council and the public to find and use. It has adopted the Information Commissioner's model publication scheme, which sets out the classes of information that should be routinely available.
104. The Council's Annual Wellbeing Report (formerly the Statutory Improvement Report) evaluates performance, summarising the findings of a number of reports on performance, including corporate measures and evaluations of delivery against the Capital Ambition, Wellbeing Plan and the objectives and activities that the Council is delivering as part of the Partnership arrangements (PSB).
105. The AGS is an assessment of the governance of the Council applied to the 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' CIPFA / SOLACE framework, as outlined in the Assessment Process and Summary.
106. The pandemic crisis has had an impact on service delivery and this has been taken into account in the determination of the Senior Management Assurance Statements (SMAS). SMT hold an action plan of significant governance issues, representing an open disclosure of the most prominent issues of governance which require attention following the SMAS review. The AGS Action Plan for 2020/21 and 2021/22 are both included in the following section.
107. The Council continued to be able to meet (albeit remotely) in May 2021 in order to establish Committees: their size, terms of reference and allocation of seats. The Council's Constitution sets out the terms of reference for each of its Committees and the decisions that can be taken by each of those Committees, and is reviewed regularly by the Constitution Committee. A number of Committees have been appointed by Council to discharge regulatory and scrutiny services and they deliver annual reports on their performance and findings.

108. Prior to services being delivered through third parties or via joint working arrangements, the Legal Services Team assist directorates to ensure responsibilities and accountabilities for governance and risk management are adequately documented. The risk management strategy and policy requires clear risk management arrangements in whichever model of service delivery is used.
109. Peer challenges, reviews, and inspections from regulatory bodies are welcomed by Cardiff Council as a means to provide assurance over service delivery, or identify opportunities for improvement.

2020/21 AGS Action Plan – Significant Governance Issues

110. An Action Plan of Significant Governance Issues is owned by the SMT, and formally reviewed and updated on a bi-annual basis. SMT considered the two broad governance issues for the prior year that the two issues (comprising of six actions) brought forward could be closed but three new actions will be added.
111. The 2020/21 Plan actions related to 1) evidenced based decision making' including aspects of Future Generations and further assurance work in relation to partnership and collaborative governance, 2) Compliance, specifically around understanding the gaps in the compliance (conformance) with the corporate process to provide a more focussed assessment.
112. The Two issues and the corresponding proposed actions are set out below;

a) Significant Issue

Informed, evidenced based decision making' including aspects of Future Generations and further assurance work in relation to partnership and collaborative governance

Actions

Review the decision making processes to ensure that all aspects connected with legal and regulatory compliance are embedded into the processes to support the management of risk.

Further strengthen and develop compliance information provided through the Assurance SMT as part of the decision making process and identify where improvements are needed as appropriate.

Implement the Partnership and Collaborative Governance Framework to improve the assurance around the governance of these models of service delivery.

Embed a consistent understanding and application of the Future Generations principle and five ways of working in its endeavours to improve outcomes for its citizens.

Progress

Technical Advice Meetings held to consider financial and legal implications prior to finalising reports.

Oversight groups set up on Major Projects, Schools Organisation Programme, Information Governance and VAT in order to provide early insight into development of reports.

Regular updates of a range of compliance information is reported to Directorates and SMT

The Partnership and Collaborative Governance Framework has been used by Directorates in undertaking their duties and considering their level of assurance.

Further guidance was issued for end of year with a view to implementing a targeted set of questions that address the Future Generations principle and five ways of working.

b) Significant Issue

Compliance, specifically around understanding the gaps in the compliance (conformance) with the corporate process to provide a more focussed assessment.

Actions

Review the compliance framework to ensure that all aspects are reflected in the 'Compliance Category' of the Senior Management Assurance Statement

Implement the process of triangulation of Assurance Statements in line with the Council's Code of Corporate Governance and provide feedback through the Relationship Management Process to ensure that all aspects of compliance are representative

Having taken the three opinions into account then we can provide reasonable assurance that Cardiff Council's governance arrangements remain fit for purpose. The steps identified under significant issues will further enhance our governance arrangements.

Progress

The areas of priority for compliance have been built into Senior Management Team Work Programme

Half Yearly meetings held with each member of Senior Management Team where the Chief Executive and Corporate Director (Resources) discuss Performance and Assurance and test self –assessments

Actions

Extend and deepen the areas of SMT investigation in respect to compliance, risk and outcomes.

Extend the assurance on the quality of performance reviews through evidence gathering at Directorate level.

Embed into the self- assessment on Assurance the Five ways of Working in respect to the Future Generations Act.

113. **Significant Issues – The Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Pension Fund (The Pension Fund).**

During 2020/21 the Pension Fund continued with the transfer of assets into the Wales Pension Partnership (WPP) sub-funds with an investment of £620m in three of the WPP Fixed Income sub-funds in August 2020. As was the case with the UK Equity Opportunities Fund these Fixed Income sub-funds are included in the Authorised Contractual Scheme (ACS) which enables the eight LGPS administering authorities in Wales to pool their investments in compliance with the requirements of the UK Government. The governance arrangement for the ACS remain unchanged, it is operated by Link Fund Solutions with oversight by the eight authorities provided through the WPP Joint Governance Committee (JGC) comprising one elected member from each authority. The JGC is supported by an Officer Working Group (OWG) made up of the eight Funds Treasurers and Investment Officers.

The November 2020 meeting of the Pension Committee approved the recommendation that the Pension Fund should transfer its existing Regional Equity holdings of c£700m into the WPP Global Equity sub-funds. In addition the February 2021 meeting of the Pension Committee approved the transfer of a further £250m into the BlackRock Global Equity Low Carbon Tracker fund with a corresponding reduction in UK and US Equity holdings. Both of these transfer are expected to be completed in July 2021. Moving forward the impact of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) issues will be an increasingly significant influence on the Pension Fund investment decisions.

It is It is considered the following may have potential implications on future financial periods and are worthy of note in this statement.

<i>Significant Issue</i>	<i>Year End Position 2020/21</i>	<i>Responsible Officer</i>
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<p>Wales Pension Partnership – Wales Investment Pool.</p> <p><i>Completion of the transfers to the WPP Global Equity sub-funds and Low Carbon Equity Fund referred to in previous paragraph.</i></p> <p><i>Creation of the WPP pooled funds for Emerging Market (EM) Equity during 2021/22.</i></p>	<p><i>The Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Pension Fund to continue to participate in the development of investment pooling arrangements through the WPP Joint Governance Committee and the Officer Working Group.</i></p> <p><i>Developments are reported regularly to the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan’s Pensions Committee, the Investment Advisory Panel and the Local Pension Board</i></p>	<p><i>Corporate Director Resources</i></p>
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Certification by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive

Councillor Huw Thomas, Leader of Cardiff Council
Date:

Paul Orders, Chief Executive
Date: