

# Shropshire Council

## Annual Governance Statement

### 2016/17

Good Governance in the Public Sector comprises the arrangements (political, economic, social, environmental, administrative, legal, etc.) in place to ensure that the intended outcomes for all interested parties are defined and achieved. In delivering good governance, both the Council, and individuals working for and with the Council, aim to achieve the Council's objectives while acting in the public interest at all times.

The Council's Code of Corporate Governance, located in the Constitution, summarises the Council's good governance principles A – G and details the actions and behaviours required to demonstrate good governance. It is based on seven 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;
- 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 Council'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; and
- G. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit, to deliver effective accountability.

Senior managers have provided assurances as to the application of these principles throughout the 2016/17 financial year. In so doing, demonstrating that the Council is doing the right things, in the right way for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open and accountable manner. These arrangements consist of all the systems, processes, culture and values which direct and control the way the Council works and through which it accounts to, engages with, and leads the communities. Annex A demonstrates the overall Assurance Framework.

This statement explains how the Council has complied with the Code and meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. This is supported by a governance audit which provides a good level of assurance.

<b>Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law</b>
---

Members and officers recognise the importance of compliance with the Constitution, specifically Financial and Contract Rules; Procurement Regulations, Scheme of Delegation and Codes of Conduct. All of which are reviewed and updated regularly.
--

Officers also comply with their professional organisations' codes of conduct in delivering services (E.g. HCPC <sup>1</sup> , PSIAS <sup>2</sup> , Faculty of Public Health), against which assessments are conducted to confirm compliance and identify any improvements required. Adult Social Care (ASC) receive regular focused audits which monitor their compliance with the law e.g. Mental Capacity Act, Deprivation of Liberty; Safeguards, Care Act and the Mental Health Act.
--

<sup>1</sup> Registered body for qualified social workers

<sup>2</sup> Public Sector Internal Audit Standards

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

Officers lead by example, both directly with their teams and in undertaking their duties across the Council. Areas of concern are identified, reported through appropriate channels and managed effectively using the Council's defined processes.

Integrity, open involvement and honest communication surround changes in services demonstrated in both Planning and Digital Transformation Services. Both Adult and Children's Social Care have a dedicated Principal Social Worker whose role is to raise the quality of ethical social work practice and ensure values and integrity of social work are improved. Civil Enforcement Officers use video badges when undertaking parking enforcement, which ensures a high level of integrity is maintained by them whilst protecting the public, the service and the Council.

Equality impact needs assessments are completed when changing operating models, policies and/or contracting with other parties, examples include: consultations on policies and strategies for the Local Plan partial review and changes to the Registrars Service. The Council has also continued to work with schools and faith leaders to mark Holocaust Memorial Day. Schools have developed and shared resources and a fruit tree is planted at each participating school as a lasting focus. Fruit trees have been chosen due to their relevance to the Jewish faith.

Recruitment policies and processes ensure that the Council is fully compliant with employment law and that no discrimination exists. Staff are well supported and receive training and developmental opportunities.

Senior officers meet regularly with members to ensure that they understand and can undertake their respective roles effectively and legally and members work closely with officers in this regard.

Members and officers are advised on and promote accurate reporting, and the importance of data quality, rules and standards. Feedback from service users is received as part of this process and acted upon. Decisions are documented transparently.

Statutory responsibilities across the Council are discharged openly and proactively, examples include having key statutory officers in place (Monitoring, Section 151 Officer and the Head of Paid Service, Director of Children's Services, Director of Adult Services, Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO)). Examples of statutory responsibilities delivered include, Special Educational Needs; Education Access; Early Years and place planning; sufficiency and admissions; Freedom of Information (FOI) and Elections; Coroner and Registrars' Services.

Internal Audit produces a risk based plan each year, working closely with directors and heads of service to ensure that appropriate standards are maintained or areas of concern highlighted and acted upon. While the internal control environment appears to be weaker than in previous years, this is known to the Council and continues to be reviewed and considered.

The Council has a zero tolerance to fraud and corruption and this was recently tested with senior management on a number of levels. Concerns are identified and acted upon in a timely manner, which can lead to investigations with outcomes managed appropriately and learning points and improvements implemented where necessary. There is a high level of success in criminal legal proceedings, licensing and parking appeals, which provides external judiciary/tribunal assurance that the decision making within the Council is robust.

The Council undertakes a self-assessment of its fraud risks, in order to identify and understand them. It acknowledges issues and puts in place plans which demonstrate that action is being taken and outcomes are visible. It is transparent about this process and

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

reports to senior management and to those charged with governance. Guidance on 'Speaking up about Wrongdoing' which incorporates whistle blowing is distributed to staff, members and contractors. Any irregularities identified will be investigated by Internal Audit or the appropriate officers within services. Audit Committee are responsible for the monitoring and overview of the "Speaking up about Wrongdoing Policy" and receive an annual report.

## Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Openness and transparency, as one would expect with a large public body, is demonstrated throughout. All service areas feed into transparent reporting processes, both internally through officer and director groups, and publicly through Council committee meetings. This is further supported by compliance to the Transparency and Freedom of Information agenda, managed in large parts by services and, although sometimes delayed, the Council is compliant with the legislation and steps to improve timeliness have been introduced. Key decisions are reported, and trialled where necessary, through the senior team and then to Members via Party Leads, Groups, Cabinet and Director meetings. Examples include: Cabinet and Council reports, policy approvals, and minutes of meetings (FGAT<sup>3</sup>, Cabinet and Directors Team).

Openness and transparency is displayed in our commissioning, procurement and contract activity including early market engagement exercises and our full feedback process for unsuccessful bidders. Examples are our work with local partnerships; looking to put in place the right model for the new Highways contract; and our broad partnership arrangements around Tern Hill (Economic Growth) and the Flax Mill.

Comprehensive consultation and stakeholder engagement is demonstrated across all service areas. Our Engagement Framework can be utilised by stakeholders to promote a consistent approach and standards. The Big Conversation included the direct involvement of stakeholders in the activity and action planning workshops. Other examples include; the transfer of local services to Town and Parish councils and other community organisations; design and shaping of Leisure Facilities, Libraries and the transfer to community organisations, Bus Strategy, Commercial Services, the development of a new Economic Growth Strategy and Highways Asset Management Strategy.

Shropshire's Safeguarding Children Board is a key engagement partner for Children's Services underpinned by a number of the subgroups, and contributes to board activity including multi-agency case file audits, sharing performance data and undertaking Section 11<sup>4</sup> audits and engaging with the Board's wider activities to promote effective stakeholder engagement.

Adult Social Care utilises a number of communication and engagement channels: Shropshire Choices Information Portal; Community Hubs; Let's Talk Local; First Point of Contact; Keeping Adults Safe in Shropshire Board; Shropshire Accident and Emergency Delivery Board and Learning Shropshire Choices dashboard and complaints. Shropshire's Adult Social Care Making It Real Board includes a variety of individuals who are recipients of Adult Social Care services and who, through their direct experiences, are able to influence social care strategic planning for Shropshire. The Board's major responsibility is to ensure that co-production with people who use services and their carers is a reality and central to future developments. The Board reviews developments and performance and holds the Council to account.

<sup>3</sup> Finance Governance and Assurance Team

<sup>4</sup> Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places duties on a range of organisations and individuals to ensure their functions, and any services that they contract out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

## Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

The Council engages positively and always sets out to work in a collaborative open partnership approach with a number of strategic partners including Central Government departments (Cities and Local Growth Unit, Homes and Communities Agency, Broadband Delivery UK), the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and neighbouring local authorities. It is also a non-constituent member of the West Midlands Combined Authority. The Council has a proactive Business Board which it services and engages with on key initiatives and policies, this has led to the development of the new Economic Growth Strategy and helped to launch and promote the Shropshire Growth Hub (part of the wider Marches Growth Hub). The management of One Public Estate is underway with other public sector partners. A multi-agency high cost placement-funding panel with Children's Services, Education Services and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has been established to manage high cost placements efficiently.

Many of our services are delivered in partnership with other organisations such as the Fire Service, STaR<sup>5</sup> Housing, West Mercia Energy, Shropshire County Pension Fund, town and parish councils and voluntary bodies and trusts. Discussions on the Northern Gateway Partnership (now renamed as the Constellation Partnership) have taken place although not as frequently as had been hoped. Shropshire has subsequently made contact with colleagues in Cheshire East (lead authority) to reinforce our commitment to the work and discussions continue throughout 2017/18. Contact with other adjacent authorities has resulted in shared best practice on social capital, developing resilient communities and exploring the impacts and opportunities following the Brexit decision. Development of Local Growth Fund (LGF) Bids has seen three deals finalised with two Shropshire specific bids put forward by the LEP Board – the Flax Mill and Oswestry Innovation Park. The Flax Mill was successful in securing LGF monies of over two million pounds and has helped secure the wider funding package from the Heritage Lottery Fund to ensure Phase 2 of the works which will start in June 2017.

An application was submitted for Local Transport Majors funding for updating the Outline Business Case for the Oxon Link Road on 27th July 2016. This was successful in November 2016 with £1m<sup>6</sup> pounds awarded to develop the full business case which will be submitted to the Department for Transport by December 2017.

The Council works with the Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly including continuing to recognise and promote the Compact<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore, a partnership with Citizens Advice provides fair access to consumers for civil advice, which would otherwise not be available to them.

Regular sound engagement between Public Health, CCG and Adult Social Care for the future provision of services is in place. This includes the agreement of Continuing Health Care funding on a case by case basis through to service redesign and commissioning through the Better Care Fund (BCF), the Transforming Care Partnership (TCP) and the Strategic Transformation Plan in conjunction with the Health and Wellbeing Board. The TCP plan is under development between the four partners (Telford and Wrekin and Shropshire Council local authorities and Telford and Wrekin and Shropshire CCGs) although ensuring clarity on the funding available from the National Health Service and the subsequent financial risk to the partnership remains priority activity for the Board. The BCF is under continual review with CCG colleagues and proposals for the disinvestment of services by the CCG included in the BCF have been challenged by Adult Social Care. Commissioning activity between Public Health, the CCG and Adult Social Care is becoming more aligned and currently joint posts are being considered at a number of levels across both organisations.

<sup>5</sup> Shropshire Towns and Rural Housing

<sup>6</sup> m=million

<sup>7</sup> The Shropshire Compact is an agreement that sets out the "rules of engagement" for how Shropshire Council and the voluntary and community sector (VCS) should work together for the benefit of the people they serve.

## Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Three Exemplar projects co-ordinated by the Health and Wellbeing Board, Diabetes Prevention; All Age Carers Strategy and Mental Health continue as planned with good stakeholder consultation and engagement, increased availability of information and improved access to services.

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

Development of the Council's Corporate Plan and Strategic Action Plans ensures views across outcomes and actions for the longer, medium and shorter terms. The Commercial Strategy approved by Council at the beginning of March 2017 sets out clear visions, objectives and outcomes which include financial, economic, social and environmental issues. Similarly, the Economic Growth Strategy supported by the Commercial Strategy, the key objective of which is to support and drive increased economic productivity, will in turn support financially and socially driven outcomes and maximise environmental benefits.

The Council's Financial Strategy sets out to resource the Corporate and Service plans. Service outcomes are linked directly to the long term sustainability of the Council. All documents within the service provide a direct or in-direct flow from the Council's Corporate Plan and the strategic objectives. The Financial Strategy sets out the short and long term implications for service delivery across the Council. Certain elements of developmental work have been put on hold while the financial position of the Council is reviewed and whilst further information is awaited from central government as to how, for example, fair funding will operate. At this time, a short term budget plan enables a balanced budget to be set for the next two years, providing the time and space to develop a more sustainable approach within the parameters of improved information flow from central government. The Sustainable Business Plan developed in late 2015 remains, however, a valid interpretation of the implications for the Council of the current funding formula and sets an approach to deliver a balanced budget, albeit at the expense of the majority of services currently being delivered.

A number of other key strategic documents have been reviewed this year to help identify and improve targeted outcomes, these include an Apprenticeship Provider Framework supporting the apprenticeship levy; strategies for Workforce, ICT, Communications, Health and Wellbeing; a Health Strategic Needs Assessment and Service plans for Regulatory Services further reflected in team operational plans.

Outcomes and outputs are defined and managed through robust project management and contract governance in all service areas as illustrated by: the Waste Contract Project Liaison Group, the Digital Transformation Programme and the Leadership Board for Shropshire Highways Alliance. The Commissioning Assurance and Performance Board has also been introduced. The Board is made up of the Council's Directors Team and meets every four weeks having the following main objectives:

- Monitoring the overall delivery of significant commissioning activity;
- Ensuring that appropriate contract management and good governance are in place in relation to the management of the significant contracts (based on risk and cost), including arms-length arrangements and new delivery models;
- Advising Audit Committee, Cabinet and Council as appropriate on commissioning activity, including relevant portfolio holders;
- Approving new commissioning activity;
- Reviewing lessons learned and taking appropriate actions as required.

The Council and its partners have a shared Social Value Framework and Social Value Charter. It promotes and embeds social value through research and by organising and delivering awareness raising and development events. Social Value has been embedded



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

within commissioned services as illustrated by the contracts with Mouchel, Veolia and Serco. Highways officers and colleagues from Mouchel have been involved with Bishop's Castle Community College and the promotion of STEM<sup>8</sup> subjects to year 10 and 11 students. In addition the project facilitated work placements for five students from the college in July 2016.

At the locality level, the focus is strongly on economic, social and environmental benefits, for example; work in the market towns to support businesses and appropriate development; the work of the Planning Policy team and involvement in supporting neighbourhood and community-led plans; and the Connecting Shropshire roll out which has clear economic and social benefits in terms of reducing isolation. Through the Council's project work and planning service, environmental initiatives are supported and planning through the design and delivery of new homes, businesses and communities.

School effectiveness and pupil performance is central to sustaining social and economic benefits. School performance monitoring procedures provides the basis for challenge and support to secure and sustain good and outstanding provision and outcomes for pupils from early years through to primary and secondary schools to post 16 provision – preparing them for the next phase of their lives.

Adult Social Care is primarily concerned with the social benefits of improving the well-being of those it provides support to, including carers, but such services will also assist Shropshire economically and environmentally in areas such as sustained supported employment, training and enabling resilient communities to develop. ASC allocates its limited resources fairly in accordance with a statutory eligibility criteria by utilising a number of mechanisms including: brokerage, robust systems connecting users and providers in the care market; contract management, (robust quality assurance processes to ensure support is appropriate and proportionate to promote independence); focus on quantitative and quality performance; and Shropshire Choices Information Portal Public Factsheets. In addition to statutory performance data submitted for the safeguarding adult return, local performance measures are being developed to monitor activity and provide qualitative information on safeguarding risks.

Opportunity Risk Management is used to help decide how the Commissioning Support Unit prioritises and provides support across Council projects.

The Council remains committed through, for example, its Asset Management Strategy and One Public Estate programme, to reducing the carbon footprint of its buildings and those used by others.

Public Health is focussed on short term evidence based cost reducing interventions. The preventive programme continues and is included within the county's NHS Sustainability and Transformation Plan and in particular with the neighbourhood component of the plan.

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

All decisions are taken correctly either through delegating to officers or by Cabinet or Council. Reports are considered by Legal Services before decisions are made to make sure they present the information required for members to make a reasoned decision.

This year saw the introduction of Strategic Action Plans led by directors and a standard approach to Service Plans with a refresh of the Corporate Performance Management Framework including milestones from the Strategic Action Plans.

---

<sup>8</sup> Science, technology, engineering and mathematics

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

All service areas produce performance and budgetary information for planning purposes and act on the implications of this information. Where inadequate performance is detected, it is acted upon quickly. All new developments are considered, formally or informally, by Risk Management staff and Finance Business Partners before reaching decision points.

Budget Consultation is undertaken annually, and consultation with members through party groups and leaders as requested. The Financial Strategy identifies the short-term and longer-term approaches to managing the budget and considers the options for delivering a self-sufficient council in the future, aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan. Implications for delivery of services and/or increases in resources are reported throughout the Council and understood and acted upon. Services do not overspend without appropriate action being taken and where this is not possible, appropriate justification provided.

Budget structures map service structures where necessary, ensuring appropriate alignment with Council priorities. The Capital Investment Board has been created and is chaired by the s151 Officer<sup>9</sup> to oversee significant future investment programmes aligned to Council priorities and key strategic objectives (income generation, reduction in costs, and achievement of social value).

Human Resources (HR) have provided a Wellbeing Plan and Health interventions for the workforce; moved to an e-learning platform to support staff development; completed a Whistleblowing annual report to Audit Committee demonstrating openness in following up concerns raised; and have an updated HR Service and Business Plan.

In Place and Enterprise the development of the new Highways Asset Management Strategy, led to the Council attaining a level three rating which will ensure the maximum capital funding from the DfT<sup>10</sup>; Development of a service redesign for Waste Recycling saw the collection of cardboard and food waste collected at the kerbside result in an extra 160 tonnes of dry recycling collected in Shrewsbury in January 2017 compared to 2016; the use of thorough and robust tender processes, evaluation criteria and assessment ensures that intended outcomes are achieved and optimised; National Accreditation for the Archives Service has been attained which will drive up standards and lead to better outcomes for customers; Connecting Shropshire, the commercial deployment of superfast broadband, demonstrates the need for public intervention to reach the targets set for superfast broadband speeds for premises, by both the Council and Central Government; a partial review of the Local Plan has been instigated to ensure that the Council has a sustainable and defensible scheme for the future. This is critical to ensuring the delivery of sustainable economic growth for housing, employment and infrastructure; delivery of business growth support and grant programmes to support business start-up and expansion interventions are carried out by the service through the growth hub, European funding programmes and participation in partner support programmes such as the Birmingham Growth Programme. These are all output focused and driven, and the impacts of the interventions are quantified and closely monitored and reported.

More generally there are clearly identified outcomes, business cases and performance measures within commissioning and re-commissioning activity to ensure optimal results. There is a business case methodology set out in the Commercial Strategy and adopted by the Capital Investment Board. This involves a rigorous analysis of a variety of options, indicating how intended outcomes would be achieved and including the risks associated with those options. Thereby ensuring best value is achieved and a sustainable income stream maintained.

---

<sup>9</sup> An officer appointed under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 which requires every local authority to appoint a suitably qualified officer responsible for the proper administration of its affairs.

<sup>10</sup> Department for Transport

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

The year saw development of a new suite of accessible measures and information for staff and managers in Adult Social Care. Improvements delivered included; an asset based strengths approach to adult social work practice evidenced through assessment/support planning; accountability across the Adult Social Care leadership team to ensure a high standard quality of DoLS<sup>11</sup> authorisations; multi-disciplinary meetings to determine approach; monthly supervision; evidence based practice; business planning and involvement with the Business Redesign Team to ensure teams within the service are delivering effective, value for money services that work to deliver outcomes in line with priorities identified in the service and Corporate Plan; and performance and budget monitoring including RAG<sup>12</sup> ratings to ensure that, where required, corrective action is taken.

Work is ongoing to bring overspend on discharge from hospitals under control. The implementation of a centralised brokerage facility, the use of block contracts, a controlled maximum hourly rate and changes to the Integrated Care Services (ICS) team providing more scrutiny of discharge decisions is controlling expenditure on hospital discharge. Using additional BCF funding that has been made available, additional social worker posts are being used to increase the speed of individual reviews following discharge, thus improving 'flow' out of the hospital. The risk of increased costs due to the disinvestment and reduction by the CCG in re-enablement and discharge to access beds that have previously been purchased to facilitate hospital discharge, is being managed across the sector, within the Accident and Emergency Development Board and its subgroups.

In Children's Social Care a business case for additional capacity to deliver accessible management information and business intelligence was delivered. The school performance monitoring policy and procedures ensure that risks presented by schools are identified, categorised accurately and appropriate challenge, support and intervention is provided through either Local Authority or external services, including through the issuing of pre-warning notices to under-performing schools and the establishment (where necessary) of interim executive boards to replace governors. The Education Access Service monitors school attendance and appropriate action is taken to address absence and exclusions. Diminishing funding presents risk to sustaining effective arrangements for monitoring, challenging, supporting and intervention in schools by the Education Improvement Service (EIS) and the Education Access Service (EAS). This increases the risk of a reduced proportion of good and outstanding schools.

Children's Services work to actions identified within the Corporate Plan which link to outcomes in their Business Plans. Officers' individual actions plans are in place for specific activities where interventions are identified to improve outcomes for the service, e.g. case file audit action plan, and a supervision audit action plan. Work Plans are in place across a number of teams/roles across Children's Services which are subject to improvement i.e. Independent Reviewing Unit, Leaving Care and Joint Adoption Service.

The Early Help Partnership Strategy has a clear set of agreed outcome measures. Every family open to 'Early Help' who needs a multi-agency response has an Early Help Assessment and family plan which sets out what interventions will be made available to meet the child's identified outcomes.

The Communications service is currently developing a strategy that complements the overall strategic direction of Shropshire Council, as defined in the Corporate Plan. An ICT Strategy and improved management control action plans are in place, all of which demonstrate activities to support the achievement of the Corporate Plan and Governance framework.

<sup>11</sup> Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards

<sup>12</sup> The RAG system is a popular project management method of rating for issues or status reports, based on Red, Amber (yellow), and Green colours used in a traffic light rating system



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

Investment has been made in the establishment and delivery of a digital transformation programme which aims to redesign how services are delivered and operated. Through the programme, interaction with the Council and access to its services will become easier and more cost effective for Shropshire residents. The project looks to replace our current social care, financial, HR/payroll and supporting systems with the very latest solutions providing opportunities for change in business processes, and long-term opportunities for clients and providers to work in a more digital way with the Council. As the IT landscape continues to change, this project will continue to develop and be reviewed until such a time that all systems and dependencies have been documented and plans for re-instating them defined.

In addition, key roles in IT have been and continue to be identified and recruited to, examples include investment in a new security analyst to help manage cybersecurity. There has been increased involvement of Council staff, rather than consultants in the programme, and regular meetings between the CEO and Senior Responsible Officers held to reinforce responsibilities and monitor progress. Potential problems are considered and addressed as they are identified through our risk and service management processes.

An investment in IT staff is underway including Information Technology Information Library (ITIL) foundation training. For Shropshire Council, the ITIL framework offers an effective change management process and an improved incident reporting system; with an overarching culture of constant service improvement. All will deliver a greater level of control across the IT department using best practice frameworks.

This work is complimented by a project to ensure the Council's incident management system (LANDESK) works appropriately for the organisation. LANDESK will provide the Council with a tried and tested system for recording and managing incidents and issues with our IT infrastructure, it also has a change management system.

In addition to, and as part of the digital transformation programme, IT solutions and systems continue to have improved controls embedded within them to ensure business continuity in the event of a disaster. Increased testing and documenting has been implemented, the Disaster Recovery/ Business Continuity Programme Board has been reinstated and meets regularly and positive results have resulted in this ongoing project. In addition, the Business Continuity/Disaster Recovery project has continued to develop a robust service delivery plan and individual business areas have been consulted, with localised plans developed to support the IT service in prioritising work in the event of an incident.

Health interventions are based on standards set by Public Health England; NICE<sup>13</sup> and the Environment Agency. Public Health has an intelligence led, risk based approach to service activity. Operational team plans are in place with priorities and targets set using a risk, harm and vulnerability 'test'. Key performance indicators are included in team plans.

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

Officers and members understand their respective roles, these are set out in job descriptions, the Constitution, Part 8 Delegations, Contract and Finance Rules. These responsibilities and accountabilities are understood and reviewed on a regular basis. In addition all members continue to receive training throughout their four year term and performance appraisals are being reintroduced for all officers.

<sup>13</sup> National Institute For Health and Clinical Excellence

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

A Workforce Development Strategy is in place to support the Corporate Plan. Portfolio Holder roles are clearly established and reporting through senior management and members identifies accountability. Section 151 update meetings and governance meetings with the Head of Human Resources, Monitoring Officer, s151 Officer and Head of Audit are established and undertaken regularly to consider governance and political issues as necessary. Budget Consultation is undertaken annually, although levels of participation are to be reviewed for future consideration.

The following examples demonstrate tools in place to support the clarity of officer roles and the development opportunities provided to them; team and service plans; budget monitoring, risk management reporting through to Cabinet, Audit and Scrutiny Committees; appraisal documentation; minutes of meetings; Leadership Development Programme; Learning Pool<sup>14</sup>; relaunched performance management process; renewed focus on sickness absence; lunch and learn sessions; CPD<sup>15</sup> programmes; regular reporting to Health, Safety and Welfare group; knowledge sharing systems; team meetings and one to ones; improved strategies (IT, Commercial, Communications, etc.); and mentoring and sounding boards for the support and development of staff. The health of our workforce is key and sessions providing health checks, exercise and wellbeing advice have been made available to all.

A Leadership programme has been launched, A full programme has been agreed, two events have taken place and there is a full diary of events scheduled over the next twelve months. Seven further well-being sessions have been held and 38 people have attended Healthy Heart monitoring sessions. Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic hospital has been identified as preferred provider for fast track physiotherapy. A full calendar of events scheduled around national awareness weeks and local events has been published with events taking place at least monthly over the period.

More specific examples of development include: NEC<sup>16</sup> contract training across the Highways team and wider training and development across the Property Services management team, which has resulted in an increase in contracts won; National accreditation programme for Highways Inspectors as part of the new Code of Practice for Highways; and officers undertaking recognised management qualifications (MBA);

The development of team action plans across services has improved the focus of resources to address capacity issues. There are examples of cross team working that are being actively implemented because capacity requirements have been identified as a whole service, for example shared project support functions; improved CPD opportunities, membership of professional organisations and participation in networks (regional and national) which has resulted in learning from best practice elsewhere. Examples include part of the Planning Service redesign and managing key business relationships; review of and action taken around Adult Social Care contract monitoring and management requirements and the identification of further capacity requirements and plans to fill the same; review of operations and introduction of e-tendering system, contract register and reference system together with the introduction of Porge<sup>17</sup>, all for increased efficiency and capacity; collaborative procurement activity with other local authorities; and review of priorities and outcomes for the Commissioning Support Unit linking through to the delivery of the Service Plan and therefore Corporate Plan.

Restructures of services to fit future business needs have occurred in Highways, Strategic Planning, Adult Social Care and Children's Services, designed to increase effectiveness and efficiency.

---

<sup>14</sup> E learning package

<sup>15</sup> Continuing professional development

<sup>16</sup> New engineering contract

<sup>17</sup> Electronic expenditure, contractor and market analysis tool

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

Children's Services have focused on providing social workers and managers with the right tools to deliver highly effective services, including evidence based model of assessment which involves each worker receiving five days specialist training, with specific training for managers. The service provides good feedback on enquiries, recognised in a bespoke Peer Review in December 2016; it has a robust training programme, which equips social workers to deliver outstanding services, a good AYSE<sup>18</sup> programme in place which evaluates well and provides our newly qualified social workers with the support and development they need in their first year of practice. Children's Services has an increased number of team managers and therefore management oversight on cases to ensure they are progressed in a timely manner and the Peer Review in December 2016 reported that leadership runs through the veins of the organisation and is blossoming.

The new Adult Social Care management structure focuses resources in the areas where they are most needed. This follows benchmarking exercises and incorporates; monthly supervisions; performance appraisals linked to development plans; leadership programmes including leadership qualifications for front line managers; service manager weekly meetings with Head of Adult Social Care; skills matrix across the whole Adult Social Care workforce; joint working, partnerships, i.e. SPIC<sup>19</sup>, joint training with Telford and Wrekin Council; and leading regional workforce development work for ADASS<sup>20</sup>

Public Health has an established CPD Programme in conjunction with Chester University and extensive training across service areas including: serving statutory notices, Health and Safety notices and legalities, and Food Safety notices and legalities. In addition, there have been successful external audits of both the Food Standards and Pest Control Service.

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

Services pro-actively input into the annual audit programme, strategic and operational risk reviews. Risks are also identified and managed in service and team plans. There is promotion of the Opportunity Risk Management Strategy across the Council and, through its application, a positive approach to managing risk is delivered when focusing on achieving the required outcomes and objectives. Operational risks are reviewed and updated regularly by services to monitor outstanding actions and identify new risks and strategic risks are managed and reported through to members and directors on a regular and appropriate basis.

More specifically there is a risk matrix operated by the Contracts team in relation to Adult Social Care contractors. Risks are identified with investments in commercial activity and a thorough evaluation of opportunity, risk and impact is undertaken when managing and disposing of assets and bringing forward new commercial models and partnerships.

Risk assessment and management is central to almost all areas of Learning and Skills. Procedures for monitoring school performance, provision for special educational needs, and access to education all identify the challenge, support and intervention necessary to secure improvement. Biannual school performance monitoring (involving all relevant services) identifies all local authority maintained schools as presenting either low, medium or high risk; Self-evaluation and improvement plans confirm focus on priorities for improvement and regular updates are provided for the portfolio holder for CYPS<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Assessed and Supported Year in Employment

<sup>19</sup> Shropshire Partners in Care

<sup>20</sup> Association of Directors of Adult Social Services

<sup>21</sup> Children and Young People Services

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

Public Health holds the lead role for emergency planning and works with external agencies and Council officers to anticipate potential risks, however as these link to issues such as inclement weather, flooding and major accidents they are unpredictable by their very nature.

All financial decisions are reported through to Cabinet, Council and Scrutiny Committee in an appropriate and transparent basis and challenge welcomed from members and officers. All budgets, actuals and variances are reported regularly with supporting information trails. The Financial Strategy identifies a short term budget plan and a long-term aspirational plan linked to the Corporate Plan for a self-sustaining Council. A full risk assessment is undertaken in support of this. Final Accounts are produced on time and in-line with best practice and have attained an unqualified audit opinion and positive value for money conclusion.

Processes and procedures are in place to ensure management information is available to enable effective decision making across the Council. Key staff are placed on organisational working groups and Finance Business Partners are important members of directorate management teams, guiding and informing decision making. Control totals and reconciliations are a standard approach to working and information is not released until the integrity of data can be assured. There have been examples in 2016/17 where information has had to be revised after release (for example Council Tax Resolution to Council February 2017). Whilst this demonstrates a potential shortfall in checking mechanisms to meet deadlines, it provides assurance that balance checks are undertaken and corrected information reported transparently. Authorisers once identified are inducted and supported in the use of the internal system for payments. Forecasting of projected spend and income is thorough and budget holders understand the risks that need to be managed in their own budget areas. In addition a number of services hold regular one to ones and performance appraisals for staff to ensure their delivery meets individual, team, service and corporate objectives, for example within the Planning, Finance Governance and Assurance Service and Adult Social Care.

The benefit of robust financial information was demonstrated in respect of a challenge on the use of Penalty Charge Notice and Licensing income. Financial tools used to set discretionary fees and charges at effective cost recovery levels and to respond to a recent legal case outcome to charge fees in two parts were sufficiently robust to defend corporate complaints, threat of judicial review and external challenge to the Council's accounts.

Continuing Health Care (CHC) funding on a case by case basis using a jointly agreed risk tool is nearer to resolution with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Adult Social Care. The outstanding debt owed to the Council from the CCG in relation to CHC has been resolved, and further work towards developing joint commissioning arrangements is now being progressed.

Quarterly Corporate Performance Reporting using the Performance Portal is delivered, making information more accessible to members, officers and the public. Key information is data quality checked, for example by applying the Data Quality Toolkits for Adults and Children's Social Care, and the checking carried out on statutory return data. Services manage their performance through a number of methods: quarterly Quality and Performance meetings with team managers and service managers to review feedback from case file audits, complaints, service user feedback and performance data and the use of dashboards. Quality and performance is a standing agenda item on team meeting agendas and exceptions are escalated up through management structures.

Children's Service Peer Review in December 2016 reported that the Team Manager and Director of Children's Services Matrix were effective and were linked to strategic intent and desired improvements. The service is awaiting an imminent Ofsted inspection.



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

Officers undertake data management and security on-line training and complete risk assessments for the use, storage and disposal of personal data. In addition, Information Asset Owners complete annual Information Governance Assurance Statements.

Data is held in a number of systems by different teams. It is stored on secure drives and databases that are protected in accordance with approved policies, for example, Evolutive CRM system which is designated to agreed users, and the Community Infrastructure Levy database.

Internal Audit sets a balanced and risk assessed programme each year identifying the key areas for review and the need for assurance. Areas not subject to review are identified to enable senior management to gather their own assurance as necessary. Audit Committee undertakes a regular self-assessment, challenged by officers and External Audit, and undertakes regular training sessions based on the identification of areas for improvement and key risks and fundamental knowledge-based needs. Over the year service managers have been required to attend Audit Committee to provide assurance not otherwise attained.

On the basis of the work undertaken and management responses received; the Head of Audit has qualified her overall opinion on the Council's internal control environment. This is based primarily on the continuing numbers of the internal audit assurances provided on the IT infrastructure and a number of application systems. These risks are already known to directors and members and are reflected in the strategic risk register. The IT infrastructure on which Council applications operate continues to present a clear risk to service continuity. This has now been the case for several years, and although it is acknowledged that significant resource and prioritisation has been applied to manage this risk and managers have reported improvements, it was also accepted that it may take several years for the necessary improvements to be implemented and sufficiently embedded to attain appropriate assurance levels. The issues currently identified are sufficient to warrant qualifying the annual audit opinion to the extent that management must continue to prioritise implementation of plans to address the matters raised. Whilst identifying these control weaknesses and highlighting them to management, it should be said, there has been no evidence of significant IT business failure or other error that could result in a material misstatement in the Council's accounts and reliance can still be placed upon it for that purpose.

The Local Government Association and Centre for Public Scrutiny have conducted a Peer Review of Overview and Scrutiny in the Council making a number key recommendations which the Council are considering how to progress. Induction and development for members will start with Overview and Scrutiny Sessions delivered in conjunction with INLOGOV<sup>22</sup> at the University of Birmingham.

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

As a public body the Council has a high level of transparency in its activities and reporting and complies with the relevant legislation.

Specific elements introduced this year to improve on this are the Commissioning and Assurance Board which will receive updates and outcome reports on commissioning and contracted activities; and a number of task and finish reviews including Planning and Youth Activities that have led to service improvements. A new Performance Portal has been introduced to support improved benchmarking activity for the Council by using CFO Insights<sup>23</sup> via Grant Thornton; and a Council wide contract register and reference system.

<sup>22</sup> Institute of Local Government Studies

<sup>23</sup> An online analysis tool that gives instant access around the financial performance, socio-economic context and service outcomes for every council in England, Scotland and Wales.

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

In the past twelve months Planning Services has been subject to two audits, an internal independent service review and scrutiny through a member led task and finish group process. This has resulted in a redesign which is now being implemented and a set of performance measures that are financial (value of planning fees earned), quantitative (determination of planning applications within a set timeframe) and qualitative (Supplementary Planning Documents complete).

Transparency is also demonstrated through the consultations and engagements that have taken place in the past year, particularly the Local Plan partial review consultation, Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy, previous consultation on the economic growth service review and the most recent consultation on the budget; draft Economic Growth Strategy; consultation on plans to commission new service providers and dispose of public assets. Both complaints and compliments are received and followed through and any learning absorbed.

Information is reported and shared through various routes including Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet, Full Council and with partners via the Local Enterprise Partnership and Management Committee. Briefings are held regularly with portfolio holders and engagement of ward members on local matters. An update on the Economic Growth Service's activities is provided at each Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee, a public meeting.

Data reports are produced to comply with transparency requirements including contracts awarded and procurement information on a monthly basis. Unsuccessful bidders for contracts are provided with full detailed and timely feedback.

Reports are written and communicated to the public and other stakeholders in a fair, balanced and understandable style appropriate to the intended audience ensuring that they are easy to access and interrogate. The Council's communication team work with officers and members to ensure key messages are conveyed in plain English and appropriate formats which do not discriminate against any member of society.

Existing and new strategies, plans and performance outcomes are discussed at Scrutiny committees allowing opportunity for challenge and change as appropriate. Reports from Children's Services have focused on school performance, elective home education, special educational needs and gaps between the performance of specific groups of pupils (such as those who are disadvantaged) and their peers.

All service areas are subject to internal audit review with a number of key systems falling automatically under annual review given their status. Information is regularly and consistently reported or communicated to the Council, senior management and to members, and also to all staffing levels as budget holders, operational risk owners, authorising officers and system administrators. Ongoing review of the service over the year has identified areas for improvement, for example simplification of message and improvements in style. The transparency agenda and FOI is managed through various teams and, although there are often competing priorities leading to delays in provision of information, it is only delay and not lack of transparency. Improvements have been made towards the end of 2016/17 which will be prioritised for 2017/18. Internal Audit recommendations are considered by the senior team on a regular basis for good housekeeping and to identify additional learning.

Finance received two external peer challenges in the year: Internal Audit were reviewed by CIPFA against the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and were found to comply, and the Local Government Association reported on a Finance Health Check which was conducted in 2015/16, which provided assurance as to the approaches taken and an improvement plan which has been delivered against.

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

In their Audit Findings for the year ended 31 March 2016, the External Auditor provided an unqualified opinion on the financial statements and an unqualified Value for Money (VFM) conclusion.

Human Resources has identified a need to sample compliance application of HR policies and in 2017/18 aim to reinstate such checks to try to support and improve levels of assurance in the Council. It is hoped that the results of such checks will enable the service to target interventions and improve levels of assurance through better communication.

Adult Social Care have a high level of transparency in decision making and involving service users in the process which has been demonstrated throughout this statement. The service is often challenged and held to account for the decisions made which are supported by employing a variety of techniques: performance reporting and dashboards; financial modelling with development of the Adult Social Care Growth Model which includes costs, client numbers with services, tracks and analyses different categories of clients, including pathway and progress through the system; New Operating Model (NOM); liaison meetings with CQC<sup>24</sup> held jointly with Telford and Wrekin Council and Healthwatch<sup>25</sup>; National Development Team (NDTI); Independent Safeguarding Boards and peer challenges.

Chelmaren Children's home has been judged to be outstanding for the fourth time in a row, with the inspectors concluding that it; "provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care."

Public Health regularly presents to the scrutiny committees, the Health and Wellbeing Board and the CCG Committees regarding its activities. The service also provides reports to Strategic Licensing Committee and to Cabinet when appropriate e.g. the Public Space Prohibition Order (PSPO) report for the centre of Shrewsbury, to deal with issues of street drinking, anti-social behaviour etc..

---

<sup>24</sup> The Care Quality Commission is an executive non-departmental public body of the Department of Health established to regulate and inspect health and social care services in England

<sup>25</sup> Health watch England is the consumer champion for health and social care

## Significant governance issues

The main challenges facing the Council appear below and are set in the context of delivering services to acceptable standards whilst achieving the budget savings required in 2017/18 and the overall funding gap of £80m as identified as part of the Corporate Plan and Financial Strategy. To ensure this is delivered and strategic risks managed, the Council will strive to achieve the following outcomes:

	Targeted outcome	Risk Target	Strategic Risk	Activity	Lead Officer	Completion date
1.	Services review, identify and deliver efficiency savings, financial assumptions become more refined and budget plans are in place to deliver services within the resources available.	High	Inability to ensure income exceeds expenditure for the years 18/19, 19/20 and beyond in order for services to be delivered.	<p>Financial strategy and sustainable business model to be refined.</p> <p>Re review of Adult Services Financial Model</p> <p>Digital Transformation Programme (DTP), Economic Growth (EG), Commerciality (C)</p> <p>to be progressed as key strategies for SC. With assurance level considered, Financial Strategy will be updated as appropriate then review remaining gap for savings proposals. Link to resources for longer term view (covered below).</p> <p>Specific Actions:</p> <p>Review resources and spend projections to identify structural funding gap from 2019/20 and beyond (target to 2022/23).</p> <p>Review DTP, EG and C to deliver robust projections of their impact.</p> <p>Remaining funding gap will be identified and profiled (target to 2022/23) and impact on services assessed (savings proposals)</p>	James Walton	February 2018



	Targeted outcome	Risk Target	Strategic Risk	Activity	Lead Officer	Completion date
				<p>Alternative arrangements for using one-off resources will be explored.</p> <p>Financial Strategy will reflect options, or agreed approach by February 2018.</p>		
2.	The workforce requirements are met by a sustainable source of people resources, flexible enough to reflect the changing needs of the Council.	High	Inadequate retention and recruitment of experienced and qualified staff results in insufficient capacity and experience to sustain the Council's outcomes.	<p>Further roll out of Management Development Programme to Service Managers.</p> <p>Response to review of current Market Supplements Policy to be developed.</p> <p>Commissioning/Commercial Skills Training to be rolled out.</p> <p>Leadership Development Programme rolled out.</p> <p>Apprenticeship Levy implemented.</p> <p>Recruitment campaign for back filling and to build capacity to deliver digital transformation.</p> <p>Gender Pay Reporting</p>	Michele Leith	March 2018
3.	Staff are healthy and happy in the workforce and therefore perform to a high standard.	High	Increases in work related stress impacts the ability to deliver council outcomes.	<p>Targeted Wellbeing Sessions and counselling to be arranged.</p> <p>Continuation of the development of the 'one stop shop' for workplace wellbeing on the staff intranet.</p> <p>Reinforcement of staff reward schemes, cycle to work, fast track to physiotherapy.</p>	Michele Leith	March 2018

	Targeted outcome	Risk Target	Strategic Risk	Activity	Lead Officer	Completion date
				Proposals for policy change (sickness absence). Performance reviews introduced for all staff.		
4.	Adults are safeguarded to the highest standards.	Medium	Failure to safeguard adults with care and support needs including adhering to legislation in relation to Deprivation of Liberties (DoLs).	Complete ICT Care System replacement process. Options appraisal for reducing/removing backlogs in relation to DoLs. Review of Mental Capacity Act/DoLs and safeguarding functions with the aim to create capacity at operational team manager level.	Andy Begley	March 2018
5.	Children are safeguarded to the highest standards	Medium	Failure to safeguard vulnerable children and meet the requirements of Ofsted.	Working closer with the risk and insurance team with serious case reviews and claims management. Focused work in relation to the SSCB and how we most efficiently support the key boards, Children's Safeguarding Board, Adult Safeguarding Board, Children's Trust, Health and Well-Being Board Locate, record and archive historic social service records. Agree proposals with statutory partners (CCG and Police) for formation of appropriate board (existing Children's Safeguarding Board)	Karen Bradshaw	March 2018

	Targeted outcome	Risk Target	Strategic Risk	Activity	Lead Officer	Completion date
6.	Improved business processes with embedded controls providing enhanced access to customers, better service delivery to clients and business continuity in the event of a disaster.	Low	Failure to implement a Digital Transformation Programme to provide ICT solutions to support business applications, will impact the strategic direction of travel.	<p>A review of the document will be undertaken in the autumn. An action plan will be linked to the strategy to ensure business as usual activity is aligned to the digital transformation programme</p> <p>Testing of backup arrangements are ongoing. We plan to do a total fail over test to Nuneaton later this year.</p> <p>Delivery of the next stage of the digital transformation programme.</p> <p>ICT Health Check ongoing delivery of identified actions.</p> <p>Further business continuity work with suppliers to seek improved solutions.</p> <p>Further recruitment to key posts to add resilience to Infrastructure, Security and Service Desk teams and to release resources to undertake other tasks.</p> <p>Specialist IT staff to support the ICT Digital Transformation Programme with further backfilling and recruitment at lower levels.</p> <p>Consideration given to elements of the data centre becoming cloud based.</p> <p>Review and improvement of the Intranet as a communications tool.</p>	Michele Leith	<p>Autumn 2017</p> <p>Autumn 2017</p> <p>All the following - March 2018</p>

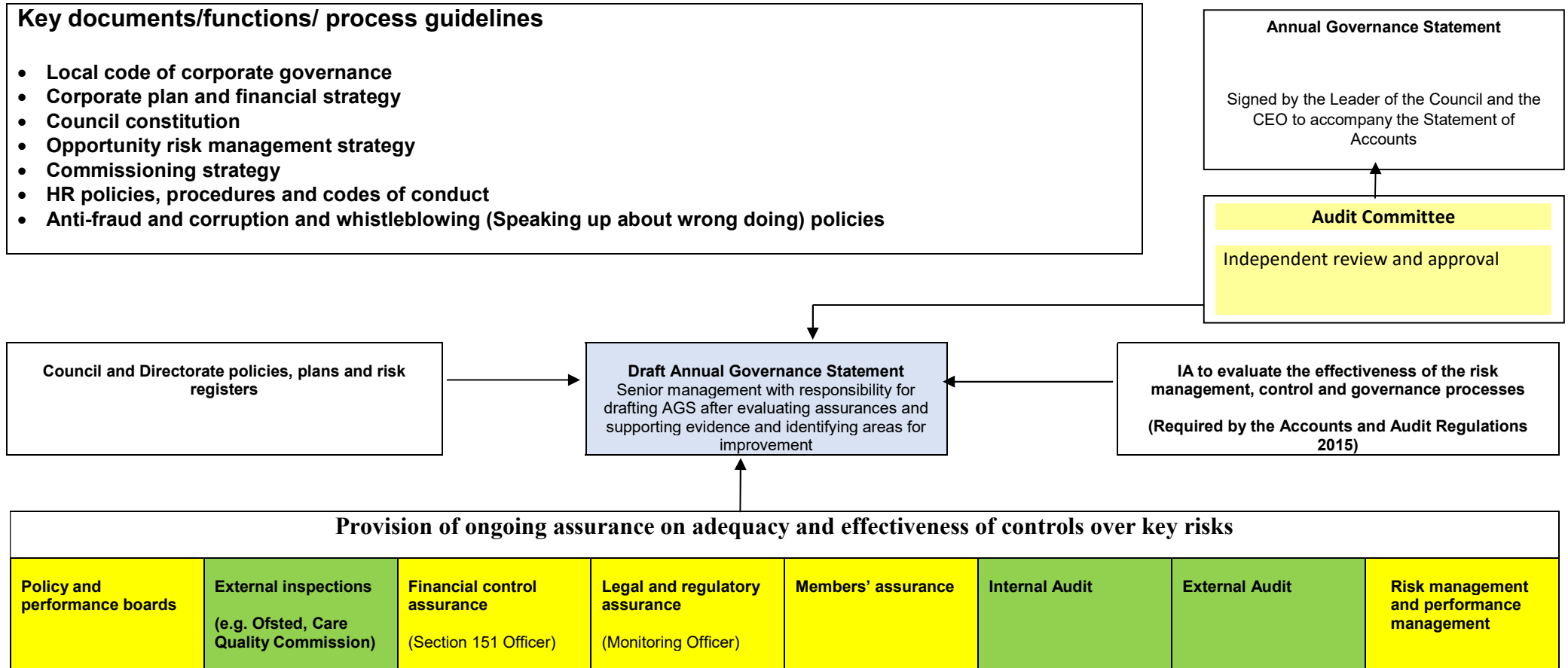
	Targeted outcome	Risk Target	Strategic Risk	Activity	Lead Officer	Completion date
				<p>Creation of a media suite to inform and support training and awareness in IT systems.</p> <p>Information Technology Information Library (ITIL) foundation training rolled out to key staff and ITIL framework adopted.</p>		
7.	Increased pressures on social and health services are known and managed in the most effect way within budget provisions.	Medium	Failure of the Strategic Transformation Partnership to deliver transformation and integration of Health and Social Care and the subsequent impact on managing demand and cost across the economy.	<p>Adult Social Care and Public Health are working with NHS to reduce demand through a greater focus on prevention. Delivery of a joint action plan with Shropshire CCG to develop a shared vision for primary and community services.</p> <p>Lobbying continues for the Council to receive a fair funding settlement to reflect the needs of a rural population.</p> <p>Seeking the benefits of Better Care Fund Opportunities</p> <p>Complete joint commissioning recruitment.</p>	Rod Thomson/ Andy Begley	March 2018
8.	A clear long term budget is identified allowing for certainty in the delivery of future services.	High	Lack of clarity from Central Government on the future funding levels and increased uncertainty re: local resources, which inhibits the ability to calculate future budgets	Digital Transformation Programme, Economic Growth and Commerciality to be progressed as key strategies for SC. This approach will identify potential resources and long-term viability of these resources. Would also link to Council Tax and Business Rate generation to provide an overview of funding levels under the Council's control. Estimate of impact of Fair Funding Review and 100% Business Rate Retention will	James Walton	March 2018



	Targeted outcome	Risk Target	Strategic Risk	Activity	Lead Officer	Completion date
			(incorporating funding methodology).	become clearer and will be able to review impact as details become available – no timescale from government due to General Election.  Specific Actions: See (1) above.		
9.	Contracts are well managed and maximum impact is obtained.	Low	Inconsistency within contract management and monitoring results in failure to support our outcomes.	Develop structure and training for directors and officers for effective contract management and monitoring.  Review of current contracts and grants from across the Council (costs, measures and monitoring arrangements).  Maintain interim arrangements to ensure that there is a functional and comprehensive Contracts Database.  Ensure a consistent and effective approach to the development of measures for inclusion in contracts and contract performance management.  Ensure that data and intelligence requirements are identified and set out in contracts.  Running of new contract reference request system, promotion and education after implementation.	George Candler	December 2017  All the following - March 2018

	Targeted outcome	Risk Target	Strategic Risk	Activity	Lead Officer	Completion date
10.	Strategies deliver outcomes that support the overall direction of the Council	Low	Failure to deliver key strategies (i.e. Commercial and Economic Growth) prevents the Council from meeting the corporate outcomes	<p>Ensure Strategic Programme Board and the Investment Board (considering economic and commercial investment propositions) consider key decisions prior to being taken to Cabinet for approval.</p> <p>Work through and report on key actions of the Commercial and Economic Growth Strategy's action plans.</p>	George Candler	June 2017

**ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (AGS) ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK 2016/17**



Key to levels of assurance
First line of defence
Second line of defence
Third line of defence