Part 5.9 Code on Corporate Governance

Introduction

The Council is committed to achieving excellence in the provision of services for the people of Slough and recognises the importance of effective corporate governance so that local communities can place trust in the way that the Council undertakes and carries out its duties. This Code sets out and describes the Council's commitment to corporate governance and identifies the arrangements to ensure its effective implementation and application in all aspects of the Council's work.

In April 2016, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE) published a framework and guidance notes entitled "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government" (the CIPFA / SOLACE framework). This provides guidance to local authorities on local codes and procedures on corporate governance.

What is Corporate Governance

The CIPFA/SOLACE framework defines governance as follows:

> *Governance comprises the arrangements put in place to ensure that the intended outcomes for stakeholders are defined and achieved.*

It goes on to say:

> *To deliver good governance in the public sector, both governing bodies and individuals working for public sector entities must try to achieve their entity's objectives while acting in the public interest at all times.*
>
> *Acting in the public interest implies primary consideration of the benefits for society, which should result in positive outcomes for service users and other stakeholders.*

In the Council, the governing body is Full Council.

Principles of Good Governance in Slough Borough Council

The Council has adopted the seven core principles of good governance set out in the CIPFA/SOLACE framework, which are shown below.

Achieving the Intended Outcomes While Acting in the Public Interest at all Times
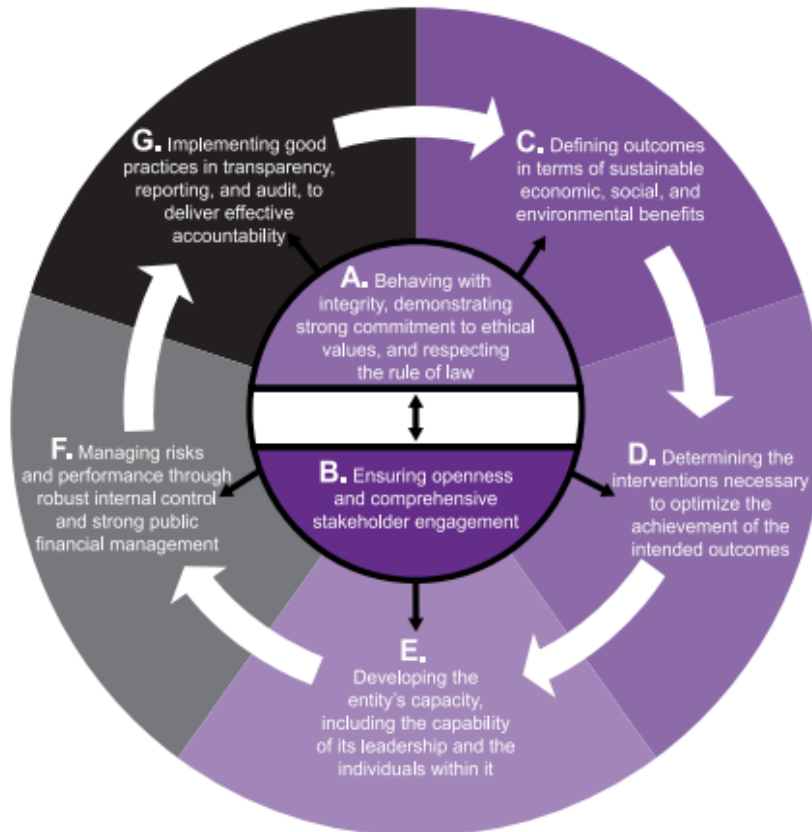
The seven core principles each have a number of supporting principles, which in turn have a range of specific requirements that apply across the Council's business. The following sections set out each sub principle, together with the behaviour and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice. The tables also reference how this is evidenced in the Council.

Annual Governance Statement

The Council reports annually to its Audit & Corporate Governance Committee in a formal Annual Government Statement, reviewing its performance against the seven core principles. This report will include an analysis of the previous year and recommendations for improvements to be made.

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

We are a steward of public resources and accountable for how we use these.

We serve the public interest, comply with the law and Government policies.

We foster a culture of behaviour based on shared values, ethical principles and good conduct.

Sub Principle	Behaviours and actions demonstrating good governance	How will this be evidenced
Behaving with integrity	- Members and officers behave with integrity and foster a culture of visibly acting in the public interest. - Members lead in establishing the principles and values for the organisation, building on the Seven Principles of Public Life. - Members and officers lead by example using these principles and values as a framework for decision-making and action. - These principles and values are embedded and communicated and regularly reviewed through appropriate policies and processes.	- Member Code of Conduct and standards complaints process - Standards Committee receiving reports on member complaints, member development programme and member survey results - Member induction and development programme - Member Officer Relations Protocol - Registers of interest and gifts and hospitalities for members and officers - Local Code of Conduct for Employees - HR policies reviewed and approved at Employment Committee - Published Whistleblowing Policy and staff training - Anti-fraud and corruption policies, procedures and training - Annual report to Audit & Corporate Governance Committee on complaints including theming and learning - Regular staff survey, with themes considered by Employment Committee. - Performance appraisal system in place - Staff induction and onboarding systems - Governance learning programme for senior officers

Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values	• Members establish and regularly monitor the ethical standards. • Officers monitor and maintain the ethical standards and performance. • Members and officers exemplify the Council's values in their behaviour. • Members set policies which place emphasis on agreed ethical values. • Officers develop and maintain procedures and regularly review policies on agreed ethical values. • Officers ensure external providers of services are required to act with integrity and in compliance with ethical standards.	• Regular review of ethical framework within Constitution • Governance learning programme covers ethical framework • Human Resources Policies • Performance management framework, including appraisal process takes account of values and ethical behaviour • Induction processes • Register of interests – officer and member • Contract procedure rules • Internal boards – Procurement Review Boards • Contract management procedures • Contract management training and support • Regular staff surveys with questions on values and cultureStaff equality groups in place • Co-production networks established in Adults Social Care
Respecting the rule of law	• Members and officers demonstrate a commitment to the rule of law and adhere to relevant laws and regulations • Statutory officers and other post holders given the conditions and work within a culture that allows them to fulfil their roles • Members and officers use their powers for the public interest and for the collective benefit of residents, service users, taxpayers and other local partners • Officers effectively respond to breaches of legal and regulatory requirements, including reporting these transparently to elected members as appropriate • Members and officers ensure that effective action is taken in	• Council Constitution (Part 3 – Responsibility for Functions), including officer scheme of delegation • Directorate schemes of officer delegations • Senior legal officer attendance at Corporate Leadership Board • Regular meetings between 3 statutory governance officers • Member report clearance processes, including early involvement of lawyers in advising on proposed decisions • Business case templates for all major decisions and projects • Monitoring Officer Protocol within ConstitutionInternal officer boards with legal representation - Strategic Procurement Review Board

	response to allegations and findings of corruption and misuse of power	• Anti-Fraud and corruption policies and procedures and mandatory training • Staff survey with questions on whistleblowing procedures Governance learning programme and other training programmes for officers are required

Principle B - Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

We provide services for the public good and will ensure openness in our activities.

We use clear, trusted channels of communication.

We use consultation as a means to effectively engage with stakeholders, including individual citizens, service users, statutory partners and local businesses and organisations.

Sub Principle	Behaviours and actions demonstrating good governance	How will this be evidenced
Openness	• Officers maintain a website set out in a clear and accessible way to provide local stakeholders with the information they need. • Members make decisions in public, unless the information falls within an exempt category and it is not in the public interest to publish this. • Officers publish information, including reasons, on significant decisions. • Decisions be evidence based and informed by resource implications, consider options, risks and outputs and be outcomes focused. • Officers ensure effective engagement, including use of formal consultation, to determine the most appropriate and effective intervention or action. For member level decisions, information on engagement will be set out in a fair and impartial way.	• Council Constitution – Article 13 – Decision Making and Part 4.2 • Corporate Plan 2023-27 commitment to ensuring residents are consulted on key decisions and are able to access advice and information • Quarterly performance monitoring reports to cabinet • Quarterly budget monitoring reports to cabinet • Council Constitution – Access to Information Rules • Member Officer Relations Protocol • Freedom of Information publication scheme • Public reports on member level decisions, with exempt reports being the exception • Significant officer decisions published with reasons for decision • Annual Pay Policy with details of senior officer pay, including interim senior officers • Children and Young People Participation Strategy • Housing Resident Engagement Strategy

		• Community engagement/development arrangements • Evidence of resident engagement when approving strategies

Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholder (such as commercial partners, suppliers and public and third sector organisations)	• Officers engage effectively with institutional stakeholders to ensure a clear purpose, objective and intended outcome for each relationship.
	• Members and officers develop and maintain relationships with leaders of other organisations across the private, public and voluntary sector to contribute to the Council's strategy and vision.
	• Officers ensure that formal and informal partnerships are utilised to allow resources to be used more efficiently and outcomes achieved more effectively.
	• Officers ensure that there are appropriate governance arrangements in place to allow each partnership to be based on trust, a shared commitment to change, a culture promoting acceptance of challenge amongst partners and an understanding of the explicit added value of the partnership
		• Formal partnerships boards, including:
		  • Slough Health and Wellbeing Board
		  • Health and Care Partnership
		  • Safer Slough Partnership
		  • Safeguarding Boards
		  • Corporate Parenting Panel
		  • Berkshire Prosperity Board Joint Committee
		• Informal partnership boards, including:
		  • Leaders' Group
		  • Regeneration, Economy & Skills Board
		  • Coproduction network
		  • Learning Disability Steering Group
		
		• Database of stakeholders
		• Partnership / Multi-agency strategies and annual reports approved and reviewed in public
		• Terms of reference reviewed at agreed frequency
		• Memorandum of Understanding in place where appropriate

Engaging with individual citizens and service users effectively	• Members will set out a clear policy on the type of issues that will require meaningful consultation. • Officers will ensure that the consultation method used is meaningful and tailored to ensure involvement of communities, individual citizens, service users and	• Corporate Plan 2023-27 • Community Engagement Toolkit • Communications Strategy • Member development programme • Equality objectives and annual report • Children and Young People Participation Strategy

	other stakeholders to inform a decision on how service provision contributes towards intended outcomes. • Officers will maintain effective communication channels, including via the use of social media, to proactively engage with Slough's diverse communities. • Officers will encourage, collect and evaluate the views and experiences of communities, citizens, service users and organisations to inform future service priorities. This information will regularly be presented to members in publicly available reports. • Officers encourage feedback on services, including via a complaints system and will publicly report to members on themes and learning from complaints. • Officers consider the need for tailored engagement methods to hear from a wide range of people, including future generations of taxpayers and service users.	• Housing Resident Engagement Strategy and tenant and leaseholder board • Strategic needs assessments, including joint strategic needs assessment • Complaints policy and annual reporting to Audit and Corporate Governance Committee, including on themes and learning • Evidence of resident engagement when approving new strategies and policies • Coproduction network

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

We define and plan outcomes, ensuring these are sustainable.

We make decisions which further our overall purpose, contribute to intended benefits and outcomes and are within the limits of the law and our resources.

We welcome input from stakeholders, including citizens, service users, partners and local organisations to fairly balance competing demands when determining priorities within limited resources.

Sub Principle	Behaviours and actions demonstrating good governance	How will this be evidenced

Defining Outcomes	• Members approve a vision setting out the Council's statement of purpose and intended outcomes and will keep this under review. • Officers ensure that there are appropriate performance indicators to measure the effectiveness of the Council's overall strategy, planning and decisions and that these are regularly reported to Members. • Policies and strategies set out the intended outcome impact on stakeholders over a defined period • Members and officers identify and manage risks associated with achievement of outcomes. • Members and officers will give clear reasons for determining priorities and making best use of resources to manage service users' expectations.	• Corporate Plan 2023-27 used as a basis for corporate and service planning • Improvement and recovery plans reviewed at internal boards and published / debated at member level meetings • Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Joint Wellbeing Strategy • Adult Social Care Market Position Statement • Quarterly performance reporting to cabinet • Strategies and policies approved at a member level, including service specific strategies for Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, Education and Housing. • Annual reports on progress against specific strategies to ensure action plans are meeting strategic aims • Corporate risk register reported to Audit and Corporate Governance Committee • Directorate risk registers • Performance indicators in contractual and company arrangements, including regular reporting to members
Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits	○ Members and officers consider the economic, social and environmental impact of proposed decisions and will balance these when making decisions. ○ Members and officers take decisions in the long-term public interest and will balance the long term impact with short term factors such as political cycles and financial constraints. ○ Decisions informed by accurate, relevant and timely performance, intelligence and	• Council Constitution – Part 3 – Responsibility for Functions • Cabinet report template and clearance processes • Corporate Plan • Capital programme structured to optimise social, economic and environmental wellbeing • HRA 30 Year Business Plan and 5 Year Capital Programme reviewed annually • Social value included in contract procedure rules • Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and other needs assessment to inform strategies

	benchmarking information where available.	• Data Strategy and access to data including Census data

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

We achieve our intended outcomes by using legal, regulatory and practical actions as appropriate.

We ensure decisions are made using robust mechanisms to ensure defined outcomes are achieved in a way that best uses limited resources and enables effective and efficient operations.

We regularly review decisions made to ensure they remain appropriate and that the intended outcomes is being achieved.

Sub Principle	Behaviours and actions demonstrating good governance	How will this be evidenced

Determining Interventions	• Members and officers consider a range of options with appropriate analysis of each to inform decisions. • Members and officers consider feedback from citizens and service users when making decisions on future service provision and on use of resources, including people, skills, land and assets	• Council Constitution – Article 13 Decision Making and Part 3 – Responsibility for Functions, including Scheme of Delegation to Officers • Council Constitution – Financial Procedure Rules and Contract Procedure Rules • Cabinet report template and clearance processes • Business case templates and training to support completion • Medium Term Financial Strategy • Budget setting process, including capital programme and treasury management strategy, with timetabling for scrutiny and public consultation • Resident surveysSafeguarding investigations and practice reviews • Complaints reports and data used to inform service reviews
Planning Interventions	○ Members and officers take decisions informed by the Council's medium term financial strategy and medium term plans, strategies and policies and will keep these under regular review. ○ Officers ensure there is a robust planning and control cycle that allows decisions to be made on operational plans, priorities and targets. ○ Officers undertaken formal engagement activities with staff, residents and service users to help determine how	• Forward plan for approval of council strategies • Performance management framework • Quarterly reporting to cabinet on performance indicators • Budget setting cycle, including capital programme, treasury management strategy, MTFS • Quarterly reporting to cabinet on budget • Service plans and performance appraisal system • Staff engagement activities

	services should be planned and delivered and will use this information to inform member and officer level decisions. ○ Officers ensure effective risk management systems are in place, including in relation to shared partnership risks. ○ Officers be agile to the need to make changes to service delivery to take account of changing circumstances and will make appropriate use of urgent and emergency decision-making processes, whilst ensuring transparency. ○ Officers establish appropriate key performance indicators to measure performance and ensure that performance reports are provided to members and the public on a regular basis.	• Risk management strategy and directorate, corporate and member reporting • Urgency procedures for transparent decision making, including reporting to Council on waiving of call in • Coproduction networks and other resident engagement groups • Resident engagement strategy
Optimising achievement of intended outcomes	• Members will set a medium term financial strategy which integrates and balances service priorities, affordability and other resource constraints. • Members will set an annual budget taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term. • Members will ensure the medium term financial strategy sets the context for ongoing decisions on significant delivery issues or responses to changes in the external environment. • Members and officers will consider the achievement of social value through service planning and commissioning.	• Council Constitution – Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules and Financial Procedure Rules • Budget setting process, including MTFS, capital programme and treasury management strategy • Social value included in contract procedure rules • Contractual KPIs focused on outcomes and social value • Joint Strategic Needs Assessment • Data Strategy and access to data to inform decision-making

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

We ensure we have the appropriate structures and leadership in place, with people with the right skills, qualifications and mind-set to operate efficiently and effectively and achieve intended outcomes within specified periods.

We ensure there are systems and investment in place to develop the capacity, skills and behaviours necessary to deliver our services and priorities.

We aspire to have a leadership which is strengthened by the participation of people with different types of background, reflecting the structure and diversity of our local communities.

Sub Principle	Behaviours and actions demonstrating good governance	How will this be evidenced
Developing the entity's capacity	• Officers maintain asset registers and keep these under review to ensure assets remain operationally effective and efficient. • Officers regularly benchmark services and commission external reviews to inform effective utilisation of resources. • Members and officers consider the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved. • Officers develop and maintain an effective workforce plan to enhance the strategy allocation of resources.	• Emerging Estates Strategy • Asset Disposal Strategy • LGA and other externally commissioned reviews reported in public • Data Strategy and utilisation of data, including benchmarking and external research to inform decision-making • Workforce development strategy • Formal partnerships: ○ Slough Health and Wellbeing Board ○ Safer Slough Partnership ○ Safeguarding Board • Informal partnership boards: Leaders Group
Developing the capacity of the entity's leadership and other individuals	• Members and officers follow existing protocols for working with each other and will keep these under review to ensure a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained. • Officers adhere to the approved schemes of delegation when making decisions, including decisions to decline delegation and refer a matter to a member body. • Members and officers keep under review delegated	• Member development programme • Member Officer Relations Protocol • Member development and mentoring programme • Governance learning programme including delegated decision making and significant officer decisions • Chief Executive appraisal process involving cross party involvement

	decision making to ensure the thresholds are effective and appropriate. • The Leader and Chief Executive ensure that their roles are clearly defined and understood to allow the Chief Executive to lead in implementing strategy and managing delivery of services within a framework set by Members. • Members and Senior Officers develop their capabilities on an ongoing basis to achieve effective leadership and enable the Council to respond to changing legal and policy demands and economic, political and environmental changes. • Members and officers undertake induction programmes and training and development tailored to their roles. • Officers ensure there is an effective recruitment and appraisal process to build a workforce with the right skills, knowledge, resources and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. • Members engage with ongoing member learning and development, including making use of external resources.	• Senior officer restructure and workshops • Officer induction and onboarding programme • Performance appraisal systems • Update on constitutional reviews presented to Council at least annually • Regular review of HR policies, including reporting to Employment Committee • Resource and capability audit informing annual service plans

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

We put in place and maintain an effective performance management system that facilitates effective and efficient delivery of planned services.

We embed risk management and internal control into our operating systems and ensure that risks are considered and addressed as part of all decision-making activities.

We ensure a strong system of financial management for the effective implementation of policies and achievement of intended outcomes. This will include financial discipline, strategic allocation of resources, efficient service delivery and accountability.

We embed a culture of and appropriate systems for scrutiny as a key part of accountable decision-making, policymaking and review.

We encourage constructive challenge as part of successful scrutiny and service delivery and will regularly publicise our commitment to public scrutiny.

Sub Principle	Behaviours and actions demonstrating good governance	How will this be evidenced
Managing risk	- Members and officers ensure that risk management is an integral part of all activities and will be considered in all aspects of decision-making. - Members and officers ensure robust and integrated risk management arrangements and review how effectively these are working. - Officers ensure that responsibility for individual risks are allocated clearly.	- Risk Management Strategy - Corporate and directorate risk registers - Annual Audit Letter - Internal Audit reports, including annual report - Audit and Corporate Governance Committee work programme - Business case templates and guidance to inform risk management
Managing performance	- Members and officers regularly monitor service delivery, including planning, specification, execution and independent post implementation review. - Members and officers make decisions based on relevant, clear objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks inherent in the organisation's financial, social and environmental position and outlook. - Members and officers ensure an effective scrutiny / oversight function which provides constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives before, during and after decisions are made to enhance the Council's performance	- Cabinet report template and clearance processes - Quarterly performance reports aligned to Corporate Plan priorities - Scrutiny work programme agreed annually and kept under review - Pre-briefing meetings for all scrutiny members to ensure effective and constructive challenge and debate - CLT – reviewing major projects, budget proposals, developing council strategies and policies, providing robust and constructive challenge and monitoring corporate performance, budget and risk. - Budget monitoring processes, including monthly reporting to

	• Members and officers will encourage effective and constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives to support effective decision-making. • Officers will regularly report to Members on service delivery plans and on progress towards outcomes achieved.	directorates and quarterly to cabinet. • Annual update reports to Cabinet on key service strategies • Calendar of deadlines for submitting reports through clearance processes, with regular review of corporate schedule through directorate and corporate leadership teams • Assurance updates for regulated services • External reviews of services
Robust internal control	• Members and officers ensure that the risk management strategy and procedures are aligned with achieving objectives. • Officers ensure there are systems in place to evaluate and monitor risk on a regular basis and that this is publicly reported at a member level. • Officers ensure that are effective counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements in place. • Officers ensure that internal assurance is provided on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control by its internal audit function. • Members ensure that a member body independent of the executive provide effective assurance regarding arrangements for managing risk and an effective control environment and that its recommendations are listened to and acted. • The member body responsible for independent assurance will be accountable to Full Council.	• Council Constitution – Article 9 Audit and Corporate Governance Committee • Council Constitution – Part 5.7 - Anti Fraud Corrupton Strategy and Policy • Internal Audit Plan • Regular reporting to Audit and Corporate Governance Committee on progress against internal audit actions and significant internal audit reports • Complaints policy and annual reporting to Audit and Corporate Governance Committee • External Auditors reports • Corporate risk register reported to Audit and Corporate Governance Committee • Annual report from Audit and Corporate Governance Committee to Full Council • Training programme for audit committee members • Appointment of independent members to Audit and Corporate Governance Committee

Managing data	• Officers ensure effective arrangements are in place for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data, including processes to safeguard personal data and sharing data with other bodies. • Officers ensure that data is regularly reviewed and audited to ensure its quality and accuracy to enable it to be reliably used in decision-making and performance monitoring.	• Information governance policies and procedures • FOI publication scheme • GDPR / data protection training programme • Information sharing protocols and MOUs • Information governance and data strategies, policies and procedures
Strong public financial management	• Members and officers ensure financial management supports both long term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance. • Officers ensure well-developed financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control, including management of financial risks and controls.	• Council Constitution – Financial Procedure Rules • Council Constitution – Part 3.6 Scheme of Officer Delegation • Directorate internal schemes of delegation • Budget setting cycle, including MTFS, capital programme and treasury management strategy • Monthly budget monitoring reports to directorates • Quarterly budget monitoring reports to cabinet • Finance business partner for each directorate • Finance IT system controls • Budget monitoring reports, with quarterly updates provided to Cabinet • Expenditure control processes agreed and followed

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

We are accountable for the decisions we make and for delivering services.

We ensure that public reports are written to enable stakeholders to understand and respond to future plans.

We are open and transparent about how we carry out activities and make decisions.

We have in place effective internal and external audit functions and have systems in place to work with each.

Sub Principle	Behaviours and actions demonstrating good governance	How will this be evidenced
Implementing good practice in transparency	• Officers write reports for the public and other stakeholders in a fair, balanced and understandable style appropriate to the intended audience and ensuring they are easy to access and interrogate. • Officers balance the need for public transparency with the risk of making information too onerous or technical for users to understand.	• Cabinet template and clearance processes • Business plan templates • Governance learning programme including writing member level reports • Accessibility review of website
Implementing good practices in reporting	• Officers report to Members in a public report on performance on a regular basis. Reports will include performance indicators on service delivery and financial management. • Officers and members undertaken regular reviews, including self assessments and external reviews on the effectiveness of the governance and internal control systems. The results of such reviews will be reported in public. • Members and officers utilise the annual governance statement process, including reviewing the action plan, to ensure a continuous focus on governance and a cycle of continuous improvement. • Officers and members work with external auditors to ensure timely information sharing for the closure and auditing of the statements of accounts.	• Publication of external reviews • Annual Governance Statement reported to members and published • Progress against AGS reported to members quarterly • Code on Corporate Governance regularly reviewed and amendments approved by Full Council • Quarterly reporting to cabinet on budget and performance management • Regular meetings with external auditors at officer and member level • CLT receiving regular performance and assurance reports and effective link between DLTs, CLTs and internal boards
Assurance and effective accountability	• Members and officers ensure that recommendations for corrective	• Audit and Corporate Governance Committee – work

	action are reported in public and updates on progress are provided. • Officers ensure there is an effective internal audit service with direct access to Members and that this service is provided with the resources to provide assurance with regard to governance arrangements and recommendations on improvements. • Members and officers welcome peer challenge, external reviews and inspections and see this as a means to continuously improve. • Officers ensure that internal audit has access to information on services delivery by third parties and that there are effective risk management arrangements in place to manage third party delivery of services. • Officers ensure that governance arrangements for partnerships include clarity on accountability and access to information to enable public scrutiny.	programme and reporting cycle • Internal audit work programme and reporting mechanisms • Reporting results of peer reviews, self assessments, assurance reviews and inspections to appropriate member level meeting • Annual governance statement process • Internal audit plan includes audits of contractor and partnership arrangements