



Annual Governance Statement 2021/22

Stoke-on-Trent City Council Governance Statement 2021/22

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Each year the city council produces a governance statement that explains how it makes decisions, manages its resources and promotes values and high standards of conduct and behaviour. This statement complies with regulation 6(2) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.
- 1.2 Stoke-on-Trent city council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded, correctly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively to deliver quality services to the community it serves.
- 1.3 The city council is committed to embedding and achieving a robust set of corporate governance arrangements. The city council is managed within a robust framework as set out in the city council constitution, which clearly outlines how the city council operates, how decisions are made and what procedures need to be followed to ensure the city council is efficient, transparent and accountable to its local residents and stakeholders.
- 1.4 The Annual Governance Statement reports on:
 - i. how the city council complies with its own governance arrangements;
 - ii. how the city council monitors the effectiveness of the governance arrangements and;
 - iii. what improvements or changes in governance arrangements are proposed during the forthcoming year.
- 1.5 During March 2020, the city council activated the Emergency Plan for the City and declared a Level 3 contingency for decision making purposes in response to the Covid-19 emergency. This included detailed governance arrangements that the city council put in place in order to manage the situation. This document focuses on the governance in place during the entirety of 2021/22, the majority of which continued to be subject to revised arrangements due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. An additional section has therefore been included in this document to reflect the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on governance (see Section 5). The position was reviewed by the City Director, in consultation with the Leader and the Council's Gold Command and the decision was taken to end the emergency arrangements, in line with national guidance, at the end of February 2022. With the cessation of the Emergency Plan, the Council's Gold and Silver meetings ended and the Council reverted to its normal business as usual management structures.
- 1.6 The governance framework is under continuous review and this has continued this year. The Monitoring Officer remains a member of SMT, corporate groups and is fully involved in the breadth of city council activity and decision making. A full constitutional review is nearing completion and amendments in year include the scheme of delegation, petitions, contract procedure rules, financial

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procedure rules and honorary freeman process. The last stage of the review is a tidying up exercise, following which amendments will be made on a frequent basis as constitutional updates and then with a full review on a four yearly basis.

1.7 The footnotes provided are internet links which will take you to the specific supporting documents and appropriate web pages.

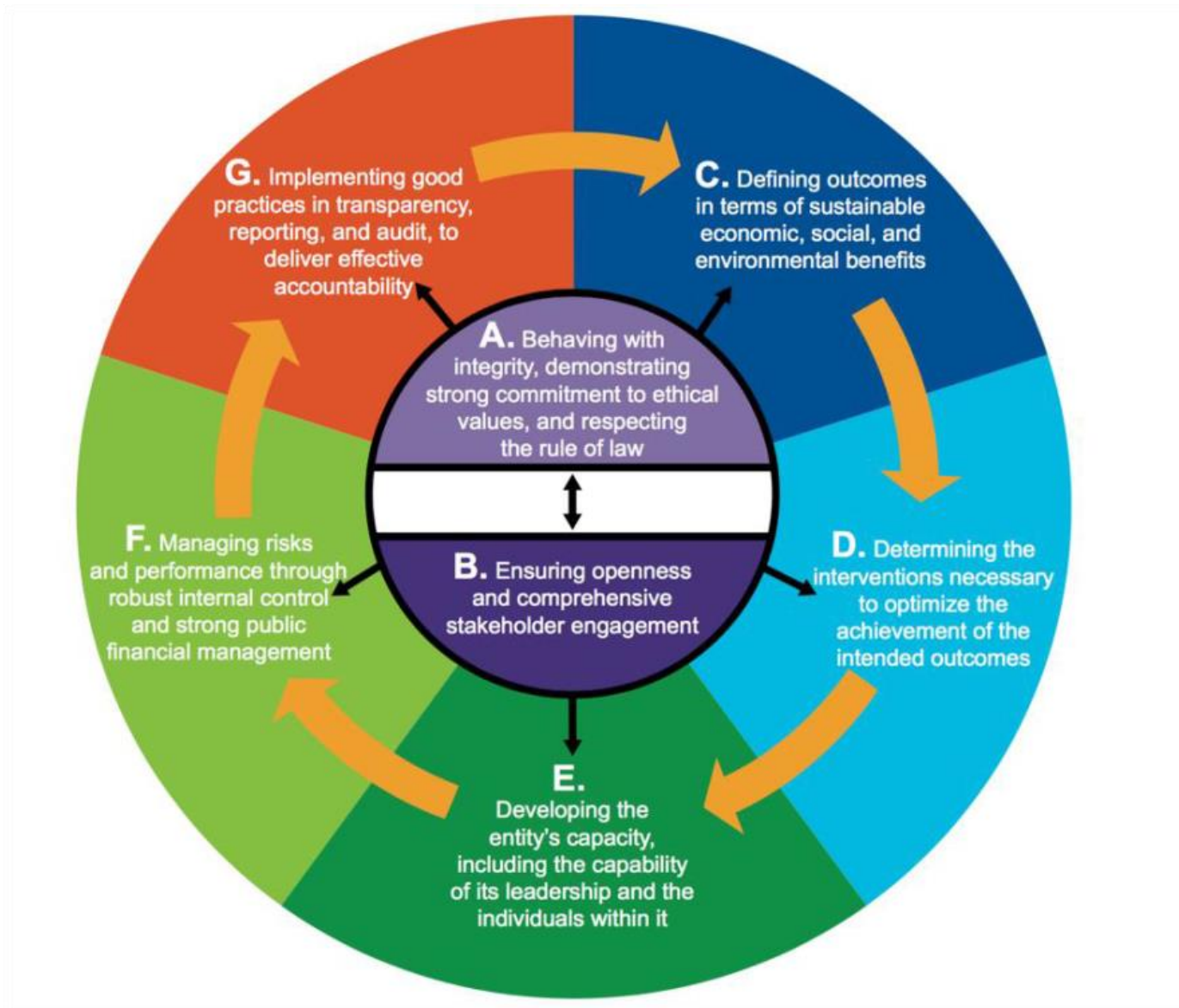
2. Scope of Responsibility

2.1 Stoke-on-Trent city council is responsible for ensuring that its services are provided and conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Local Government Act 1999 also places a duty on all councils to secure continuous improvement and to demonstrate economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

2.2 In discharging this overall responsibility, the city council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, and arrangements for the management of risk.

2.3 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and The International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) identified seven key principles relating to governance in their document *International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector (CIPFA/IFAC, 2014)*. A summary of the Seven Principles of Good Governance in the public sector and how they relate to each other is shown over:

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The Purpose of the Governance Framework

- 2.4 The Governance Framework comprises the systems and processes, culture and values by which Stoke-on-Trent city council is directed and controlled. This, together with its activities and leadership, enables it to monitor and manage its performance for delivering cost effective services.
- 2.5 Effective performance and risk management allows the city council to have increased confidence in achieving its objectives and also allows the citizens of Stoke-on-Trent to have increased assurance in the city council's governance arrangements and its ability to deliver.
- 2.6 The system of internal control is a significant part of the governance framework and is designed to manage risk to an acceptable level. Risk cannot be eliminated and therefore controls can only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. Internal Control is based on a process to:
- Identify and prioritise risks that prevent the achievement of the city council aims and objectives;
 - Evaluate the likelihood that risks are realised and their impact;
 - The appropriate management of those risks.
- 2.7 The city council has a number of committees that challenge and review the options considered and actions taken by the city council. The aim is to ensure that robust decisions are made that focus on achieving the best strategic outcomes for local residents within the available level of resources.
- 2.8 The city council has an Audit Committee,¹ which, has as part of its function the responsibility of considering the effectiveness of the city council's risk management arrangements, the control environment and associated anti-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements, and seek assurance that action is being taken on issues identified by auditors and inspectors. In discharging this function, the Audit Committee will ensure compliance with such codes, protocols, statements and policies as are necessary to meet its responsibilities, which includes the appropriate arrangements for the management of risk.

¹ [Audit Committee Details](#)

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3. The 2021/22 Governance Framework

- 3.1 The CIPFA/IFAC framework (Good Governance in the Public Sector), provides advice and indicators to good governance which affords the city council the opportunity to review and test its governance and structures in delivering best practice.
- 3.2 The CIPFA/IFAC framework identifies the seven core principles of good governance as:
1. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.
 2. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
 3. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.
 4. Determining the interventions necessary to optimize the achievement of the intended outcomes.
 5. Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.
 6. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.
 7. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.
- 3.3 The governance framework covered by this statement has been in place at Stoke-on-Trent city council for the year ended 31 March 2022 and is considered up to July 2022. An assessment of the city council's governance arrangements against each core principle is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.4 In October 2020 the City Council approved the Stronger Together Strategic Plan 2020-24 which sets out the Council's strategic priorities, as well as the objectives that it will aim to achieve over the next four years and the approaches it will take to achieve them. The over-arching vision for the Council and the wider city for 2024 will be used to shape and influence activity and service delivery, as well as the Council's interactions with partners, residents and stakeholders. City Council also approved the revised Performance Framework which sets out arrangements for corporate monitoring and reporting of performance against these objectives and priorities.
- 3.5 The city council acknowledges the continuing governance challenges presented through reduced funding and increasing demand for services, with Children and Family Services continuing to face unprecedented pressures, some of which were further exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic. To meet these pressures, the council's budget strategy has been designed to support a transformation of services. There is a need to radically reshape services to achieve higher quality, deliver greater value for money and become more responsive. This includes recognising changes in how residents access services, which have accelerated during the coronavirus pandemic, and which will enable the council to better understand the changing needs and priorities of the city's communities. By 2024 the council will be a truly flexible, seven-day council, using advances in digital service delivery and the best customer care to meet the needs of the city's residents and businesses. The council's operating plan sets out an allocation of resources in line with the budget, to

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identify key performance measures, efficiency and productivity requirements, as well as key risks and mitigations and details of key enablers to continually improve our services. The city council has introduced the Stoke-on-Trent City Forum, a partnership that will drive forward plans for the city and deliver the ambitions set out in the Powering Up Stoke-on-Trent Prospectus.

4. Review of Effectiveness

4.1 A review of the city council's governance arrangements draws on several sources including:

- Service updates from individual service managers
- Reviews of partnership governance arrangements
- External inspections by government agencies
- Internal Audit reviews which consider and report upon compliance with corporate policies and procedures
- External audit reports

4.2 The Audit Committee plays a key role in the city council's review of the effectiveness of its governance framework. It seeks assurance on the adequacy of the city council's risk management, control and governance arrangements.

4.3 The Audit Committee completes a self-assessment against updated CIPFA guidance. The previous self-assessment was undertaken in 2018 and due to changes in the make-up of the Committee following local elections in May 2019 plans were established to undertake a revised self-assessment and a knowledge and skills assessment to support a training plan for the Committee. This was originally planned for March 2020 but was been postponed due to the Covid-19 emergency situation. Following further changes in the committee's membership, it is planned that a self-assessment will be undertaken in 2022.

Internal Audit and Review

4.4 The city council has a strong Internal Audit function and a positive working relationship with External Audit. The arrangements for the provision of Internal Audit are contained within the city council's Financial Regulations which are included within the Constitution. The Director of Strategy & Resources, as Section 151 Officer is responsible for ensuring that there is an adequate and effective system of Internal Audit of the city council's accounting and other systems of internal control, as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

4.5 In 2017 CIPFA published revised Public Sector Internal Audit Standards to promote further improvement in the professionalism, quality, consistency and effectiveness of internal audit across the public sector. The city council has adopted these standards and Internal Audit has carried out self-assessments with areas for improvement being addressed. An external review was undertaken in

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February 2018. This gave the city council's internal audit service the highest category of "Generally Conforms" to the requirements of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and those of the Local Government Application Note. An action plan was produced to implement the three recommendations and ten suggestions from the review, all of which have now been implemented.

- 4.6 Internal Audit's Annual Plan is prioritised by a combination of key and statutory systems' assessments and reviews on the basis of risk, and the city council's corporate governance arrangements. The work incorporates reviews of the main financial systems, other systems identified as high risk, grant certification work and the continued development of proactive fraud work. The resulting work plan is discussed and agreed with Directors, the Audit Committee and shared with the city council's external auditor. All planned audit reports include an assessment of the adequacy of internal control and a prioritised action plan to address any areas needing improvement where for example, controls need to be improved or the overall control environment strengthened. These are provided to Directors, and other officers as appropriate, and a summary is provided to Members on a quarterly basis.
- 4.7 The Internal Audit review of the city council's control environment is set out in the annual report to Audit Committee which concluded that from the work carried out during 2021/22, the level of assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of the city council's control environment is Satisfactory. This includes an assessment of the level of assurance the City Council's governance arrangements can provide. A number of governance audits were completed or in progress in 2021/22 including business continuity (covid-19 national emergency), corporate contract management and budget management.
- 4.8 Whilst a satisfactory opinion on the control environment as a whole is positive, individual audit reviews have highlighted a number of opportunities to improve control further which are to be addressed through the implementation of internal audit recommendations. In addition, the council plans to continue to undertake a full review of control process during 2022/23 to ensure consistent and regulatory controls are applied at all levels. This work will provide additional capacity to strengthen the council's control environment.

External Audit and Review

- 4.9 Ernst & Young LLP have been appointed by the Public Sector Auditor Appointments (PSAA²) as the city council's external auditor from 2018/19 for a five year period. Their annual work programme is set in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office and includes nationally prescribed and locally determined activities. City council officers work closely with external audit to provide information and assurance in support of those conclusions and acts on any recommendations made as a result.

² [PSAA](#) website provides information regarding the National Audit Office Code of Practice in relation to audits of local authorities

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- 4.10 The city council received a qualified Value for Money (VFM) conclusion for 2019/20 due to the issues identified within Children's Services and the court of protection administration, all other services were viewed as having the proper arrangements in place. The issues within Children's Services and the Court of Protection administration identified weaknesses in proper arrangements for understanding and using appropriate and reliable performance information to support informed decision making and performance management, and managing risks effectively and maintaining a sound system of internal control. The city council has received an unqualified opinion on the financial statements for 2019/20 and the previous three years. The city council noted the recommendations resulting from the report and took steps to make further improvements. The accounts for 2020/21 onwards are pending final sign off by our external auditors.

External Inspections

- 4.11 The city council is subject to a number of inspections by regulatory bodies on many of the services that it provides. During 2021/22 the number of external reviews completed was reduced due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. However, some reviews were undertaken and progress continues to be made as the result of previous inspections.
- 4.12 The city council has 6 internal services registered with Care Quality Commission, these are:
- The Meadows – last inspection Nov 2020 – CQC Rating Good
 - Marrow House – Last inspection Aug 2019 – CQC Rating Good
 - Enablement service – Last inspection June 2018 – CQC Rating Good
 - School Street – Last inspection Nov 2017 – CQC Rating Good
 - Shared Lives – no inspection has taken place since registration in May 2019 therefore no rating as of yet
 - Community Care and Support Service - no inspection has taken place since registration in February 2022 therefore no rating as of yet
- 4.13 Due to the pandemic the CQC have changed their inspection regime and have continued to monitor regulated activity remotely. All services have been required to return a provider information request (PIR) with key information aligned to the Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE's) to allow them to make an informed decision on whether services require further inspection. All internal services (apart from the community care and support service) have submitted PIR's and the CQC have taken no further action based on the information submitted and ratings remain the same where rated. The Meadows, Marrow House, School Street, Shared Lives and the Enablement service through Covid have also had support calls from their CQC inspector via their emergency support framework.
- 4.14 In June 2022, the CQC have reviewed data relating to the Meadows, Schools Street, the enablement service and Marrow House and highlighted on their website that no action is required in relation to forth coming inspections or change to ratings.

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- 4.15 Two external inspections were undertaken in the Employment, Learning & Skills area, a stocktake visit by the Further Education Commissioners Office (DFE) and an OFSTED progress monitoring visit in January 2021. Following these reviews, there has been a full inspection of the Council's Further Education and Skills service in September 2021, the overall outcome of which was 'Requires Improvement' although there were a number of areas judged as 'Good' including: Quality of education; Behaviour and attitudes; Personal development; Education programmes for young people; Adult learning programmes. However, Leadership and Management and Apprenticeships were both judged as 'Requiring Improvement'. The council have progressed work to respond to the findings of this inspection, including strengthening the Governing Body and developing our strategic planning.
- 4.16 A post-Ofsted plan is in place and in progress that not only captures Ofsted recommendations but also identifies those areas of 'Good' that can be built upon as well as other service development areas that are important to the Council. Post-Ofsted activities take place against a backdrop of an internal reorganisation of the Further Education and Skills service whereby the Quality and Compliance arm has been separated from the delivery arm to create more of a distinction between the role of the Council as a provider of further education and skills and its broader, city-wide stake in, and influence on, the skills and employment landscape of the city as a whole and its relationships with key partners such as Stoke-on-Trent College.
- 4.17 In February 2019, OFSTED undertook an inspection of children's social care services. The review looked at the impact of leaders on social work practice; the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection; and children in care and care leavers. The results of the review were an overall effectiveness score of inadequate. The DfE issued a revised direction in March 2020 requiring the council to enter into a formal partnership with Leeds City Council, continue to co-operate with the Children's Services Commissioner and accept support provided by Partners in Practice. Since the inspection the city council has undertaken significant work to address this by implementing the Improvement Plan, which is overseen by the DfE appointed Children's Commissioner and monitored by the multi-agency Children's Improvement Board on a monthly basis, chaired by the Commissioner. As part of the council's children's social care improvement journey, the council have had six Ofsted monitoring/focused visits, including three this reporting year: an inspection in July 2021 of the support offered to our care leavers, of our front door in December 2021, and child in need and child protection work in March 2022.
- 4.18 The inspection of support for care leavers found that the council have made progress against most of the actions raised in the 2019 full inspection. Ofsted found that the council have a broad understanding of its strengths and areas of development, and have a commitment to improving outcomes for care leavers at the highest level of the local authority. There remain areas that need further improvement, including dynamic planning for care leavers to keep pace with their changing needs, the role of supervision and quality assurance activity in identifying deficits in practice and focusing on outcomes, and evidencing the impact of care leavers on strategic planning.
- 4.19 The inspection of the council's front door found that the council have made "discernible progress and improvement" in the quality of practice in this area. Ofsted noted a renewed focus on threshold application, management oversight and decision-making, and found

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that the majority of children and families receive services that are appropriate to their level of need. The fifth and final monitoring visit found improved quality of practice for children subject to child in need and child protection plans as well as children in PLO (Public Law Outline), the stage prior to care proceedings. Ofsted said that senior leaders and managers have a line of sight on practice through a firmly embedded quality assurance framework. However, there is inconsistency in the quality of practice and workforce stability is fragile, which has caused caseloads to increase and reduced the quality of some of our social work.

- 4.20 The council have had two six-month reviews held with the Department for Education, the Children's Commissioner and Leeds as the council's Improvement Partner to review our children's social care improvement journey. The feedback from the February review was positive, with the DfE and Commissioner acknowledging the progress the council have made on its improvement journey and the strength of the leadership. Key areas for improvement discussed included stabilising the workforce through developing the approach to recruitment and retention, as well as continued work to improve the feedback loop for improving practice. The Annual Conversation with Ofsted took place in June 2022 which will cover all areas of the directorate.
- 4.21 The council are now preparing for a full Ofsted ILACS (Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services) which is expected later this year. The council's improvement journey is overseen by our multi-agency Children's Improvement Board, chaired by the DfE appointed Children's Commissioner Paul Moffat. The council continues to receive support from Leeds City Council as an Improvement Partner. The council have completed a stocktake of its Improvement Plan and alongside completing the remaining activities, are working to prepare a longer-term continuous improvement plan.
- 4.22 The council has been preparing for an inspection of its Youth Justice Service which took place in June 2022. Other inspections the council could be subject to including a SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) inspection or a JTAI (Joint Targeted Area Inspection) and the council are working to improve services in readiness.
- 4.23 A new Housing Customer Engagement Strategy 2021 was consulted upon last year, and approved by Cabinet in December 2021. This is now into implementation, supported by a new resident engagement structure within the Housing Management Service. There are currently no further independent housing health checks planned, with the focus being on continued quality assurance through the embedded housing performance framework to ensure the HRA continues to operate to standards assured by these previous external inspections, until the proposed proactive regulatory regime within the Social Housing White Paper is implemented; this proposal will remove the serious detriment test and introduce routine inspections for the largest landlords (over 1,000 homes) every four years, supported by a review of the Consumer Standards. Whilst awaiting a new Social Housing Regulation Bill, the Housing Division continues to monitor its progress against the Charter for Social Housing Residents Social Housing White Paper, with a position statement provided to Policy Development in March 2021, and a further report on progress due to be presented to Policy Development in July 2022.

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4.24 The outcome of the city council's assessment of its governance arrangements in 2021/22 is summarised below. A more detailed assessment against the seven CIPFA/IFAC principles is set out in **Appendix 1**.

5. Response to Covid-19 Emergency

5.1 From March 2020, the city council activated the Emergency Plan for the City and declared a Level 3 contingency for decision making purposes in response to the covid-19 emergency. These arrangements were in place until February 2022 when normal management structures were resumed. The council put detailed governance arrangements in place in order to manage the situation. An internal Gold Strategic Command Group was established to set the city council's strategy with regard to the incident, manage the overall budget and undertake decision making at the strategic level, supporting the City Directors and Directors who took decisions under the emergency plan delegated powers or the scheme of delegation as appropriate. Meetings were held daily initially and when lockdown statuses changed and then moved to weekly and are now operating on 'as required' basis as part of the overall Senior Management Team arrangements. In addition, a Tactical Co-ordinating Group Internal (Silver) was established to coordinate activities and move forward with tasks delegated by Gold and has had a similar meeting pattern. Changes were agreed to the city council's constitution at a city council meeting on 26th March 2020 to ensure that effective decision making could continue during the emergency situation. A detailed schedule of all changes to legislation has been maintained setting out the impact for the city council. Whilst temporary regulations permitted, virtual meetings took place which the Monitoring Officer ensured were conducted in accordance with the legislative framework.

5.2 The government provided a number of COVID-19 grants during 2020/21 to assist the city council throughout the pandemic, and have maintained some financial support for the ongoing impact which has affected all local authorities across the United Kingdom in 2021/22. This has enabled the city council to carry on charging COVID-19 expenditure against these grants as well as utilising the earmarked reserve of £6.233 million which was set up for these purposes. Through ensuring COVID-19 expenditure has been fully identified against the specific grants, it gives the city council a greater flexibility for the future whilst implementing plans to recover. Whilst the city council has included estimated costs that continue as a result of the pandemic within the MTFS, budgets are closely monitored and work continues to be undertaken to understand the longer term financial implications.

5.3 On 25 March 2021 the Government announced a new COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF) of £1.5 billion. The fund will be available to support those businesses affected by the pandemic but that are ineligible for existing support linked to business rates for the financial year 2021/22. Stoke-on-Trent City Council's CARF allocation was £5,609,995. Billing authorities were responsible for designing the discretionary relief schemes that are to operate in their areas. The council's policy for Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF) was approved by Cabinet in April 2022. To ensure that the council are directing support towards ratepayers who have been adversely affected by the pandemic, the council wrote to all potentially eligible businesses inviting them to complete an online application form. In addition to the development of the CARF scheme the council issues £98.8m of grants issued to businesses across the city during COVID19. These grants were issued under the Emergency Plan and the Director of Strategy and Resources existing

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delegations. The majority of these grants were mandatory in nature and issued under direct guidance from central government. The council's approach to the administration of these grants was approved by Cabinet and included completion of fraud risk assessments and post payment assurance plans.

- 5.4 Internal Audit undertook a review of the adequacy of governance arrangements during this emergency period which was issued in December 2021. The purpose of the review was to provide management with assurance on the business continuity and governance arrangements the authority put in place in response to the Covid-19 national emergency to ensure its operational resilience and the community's continuing welfare and security. The resulting opinion was positive assurance and the recommendations made will inform future emergency planning arrangements.
- 5.5 Following the audit review of the council's operation under the Emergency Plan it was agreed that a retrospective review be carried out of the governance and structure/decision-making under the Emergency Plan. The review was carried out by the Monitoring Officer and identified that the Emergency Plan was enacted at the right time with the correct structure of Gold and Silver decision-making. This proved effective throughout the pandemic and created a clear command and control arrangement. The council did not prior to the pandemic have decision-making contingency arrangements in place for decisions required under the Local Government Act 1972. These were quickly implemented early in the pandemic and are now contained in the Constitution allowing them to be utilised in the future if required. The decision to operate under the Emergency Plan and Level 3 Decision-making Contingency were reviewed regularly throughout the pandemic and the decision to continue with was recorded in Gold meeting minutes and widely disseminated.

6. Framework – key improvement areas

- 6.1 The following paragraphs detail key elements of the framework which have undergone significant improvements and further developments are planned over the coming year.

Operating Framework

- 6.2 In May 2021 Cabinet approved the Operating Plan for the 2021/22 Financial year, the Operating Plan is part of the Operational Framework to ensure that all elements of the organisation are able to work more closely together to deliver the Stronger Together Strategic Plan, strengthen partnership working and improve outcomes for our residents. This provides a clear golden thread from the vision and priorities through to team and individual plans. The Operating Plan translates the Stronger Together vision into a set of key requirements that should be met in order to ensure delivery of the priorities and objectives.

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6.3 There are three overarching priorities:

- delivery of better outcomes for children and young people as a whole-council endeavour;
- a relentless focus on using our assets, powers and resources to support delivery of economic growth and opportunity;
- a continuous emphasis on the importance of generating civic pride by the way that the city is cared for and promoted.

6.4 The plan details the challenges of moving from the response phase of the pandemic to recovery and services adapting to changes in demand with the 2021/22 financial year being a year of transformation for how the council operates. This recovery is organised into three main workstream centred around, economic, social and organisational recovery as well as making progress against the Stronger Together objectives. The Operating Plan also provides an overview of our ongoing work to improve the ways in which the organisation functions. Through our overall transformation programme, we have identified six cross-cutting priorities for improvement and development:

- Process and activities
- Organisation and people
- Information, data and technology
- Location and assets
- Suppliers and partners
- Management and governance.

6.5 During 2021/22 the council approved a suite of strategies designed to support delivery of the Stronger Together vision. The Customer Service Strategy, the Digital Strategy, the Workforce and Organisational Development Strategy and the Asset Management Strategy will be supported by prioritised action plans to enhance the services we provide to our customers and residents, making best use of our financial, human and physical resources. Delivered through the transformation programme these strategies will focus heavily on the digital agenda to ensure the council is a modern, innovative, efficient and effective organisation and will feed into the Medium Term Financial Plan as savings and benefits are identified and realised.

Team Plans

6.6 In April 2021 team plans were finalised that focused on continuous improvement and driving efficiency. The Team Plans are designed to encourage managers and teams to consider how they contribute to Stronger Together, and where there may be scope to work differently in future to help strengthen collaboration and partnership working to improve outcomes for our residents. Team Plans are a critically important element of the operating framework. They reinforce the 'golden thread' linking priorities and outcomes in the Strategic Vision with all levels of business planning across the organisation. The process for developing team plans for the 2021/22 Financial Year started early in the new calendar year with the additional ask for every team to detail how they will support the council's

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priority in respect of children and young people with all teams doing something really purposeful for our looked after children and care leavers.

Strategic Measures

- 6.7 The 2021/22 monitoring year saw no changes to the strategic measures, however in January 2022 Cabinet agreed targets for the measures (where appropriate) for the 3 years to 2023/24. The performance of the strategic measures continues to be reported to Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny Committees on a quarterly basis.

Analytics

- 6.8 In order to achieve the strategic objective of improving the use of data in decision making and service improvement to improve outcomes for residents it is necessary to commit to developing analytics within the council. This involves the creation of an engine room and business intelligence system to best support operational planning. This will provide:

- Real time insights – to understand the impact of our actions
- Predictive analytics - to plan well for the future
- Self-service - drillable management dashboards
- Efficient reporting - saving officer & member time/£, paperless/light reporting
- Integrated reporting - triangulation of data across multiple systems to identify synergies
- Deep dive analysis - focus on deep dive cross functional analysis

The rollout of Power Bi is now into its second year having delivered a number of Use Case reports across each directorate. Phase 2 of the project includes working with a 3rd party to develop a Business Intelligence/Power Bi Roadmap and a Data Strategy which is a key element to support the drive to deliver more insight from the valuable data that we hold.

Management of Risk Arrangements

- 6.9 Stoke-on-Trent City Council recognises that the management of risk assists achievement of its objectives, and is committed to identifying and responding to risks which could impact on its strategic aims, business plans and operations. The management of these risks assist members and officers to deliver the council's priorities. The Director of Strategy and Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the Assistant Director – Governance and Registration (Monitoring Officer) are the joint senior leads for the management of risk. The current Management of Risk Policy, which is reviewed on an annual basis, was approved by Cabinet in April 2022 and "...applies to all directorates and to all areas of operation including all service provision, initiatives, projects and developments. It requires that all

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council managers, officers and elected members address the issue of day to day risk management and associated risk whilst making any and all policy decisions.”

- 6.10 The city council’s strategic risk register, which focuses on identifying those risks that may significantly impact on the achievement of its strategic objectives and priorities is maintained and managed by its senior management team, and is reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Audit Committee. This is supported by the management of directorate and operational risks, with a framework in place for the recording and maintenance of risk registers by the respective responsible officers. In addition to this the management of risk also forms an integral part of the city council’s approach to project governance.
- 6.11 In 2019 the city council’s insurers; Zurich, undertook a review of its risk management arrangements. At the time the review noted: “...the City Council takes the management of risk to its objectives seriously and some key stakeholders recognise the value that the risk management framework brings to the organisation. Focus is given to understanding the key strategic risks facing the Council and there is also evidence that pockets of the organisation are doing a considerable amount on an ongoing basis in reviewing lower level risk registers.” Since this review the city council has continued to work with Zurich to further develop, embed and improve the effectiveness with which it manages risks; including further enhancing the strategic risk register, and assisting to embed a framework to manage directorate and operational risks, and the management of risks within the governance of projects.

Financial Resilience

- 6.12 The uncertainty caused by the coronavirus pandemic continues to make financial forecasting challenging as the council settles in to what can be called the ‘new normal’. The financial impact of the coronavirus pandemic continued throughout 2021/22 with pressures being felt in all services. The city council continues to undertake further work to understand the longer term financial implications of the ongoing response to the virus. The city council has reflected on the changing environment in which it operates and the changing financial needs brought about by the pandemic, ensuring that city council services continue to be delivered to those residents with the greatest needs. As part of the recovery plan the city council introduced the Operating Plan, which set out an allocation of resources in line with the budget, to identify key performance measures, efficiency and productivity requirements, as well as key risks and mitigations and details of key enablers to continually improve to our services.
- 6.13 In addition to the direct and indirect impact of covid it should be noted that Children and Families Services continue to face unprecedented pressures, some of which have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Work in relation to the Children’s Improvement Plan, managing demand and an ongoing review of commissioning in placements is expected to deliver sustainable savings over the medium term, but is proving challenging in the short term.
- 6.14 Despite the financial challenges faced, risks in the main continued to be managed. As at the end of March 2022, planned budget management actions taken throughout the year to manage in year pressures resulted in an underspend of £0.4 million, after planned

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transfers to and from earmarked reserves. This successful approach enabled transfers to earmarked reserves to cover future uncertainties / risks / pressures in the forthcoming year, as well as those identified within the budget strategy. In addition, the strong financial management throughout the year also enabled the replenishment of the covid reserve, which has been set aside to offset on going covid pressures, plus the impact of inflation and other environmental factors that are impacting on expenditure.

6.15 In light of the financial challenges faced by the authority, the city council introduced a framework to strengthen financial control and budget management across the authority:

- Financial Review Group (FRG) – this monitors, manages and challenges the use of resources and financial performance across the city council. Additional emphasis is being put on embedding a culture of personal responsibility and accountability, performance management and continuous improvement of services through the operational framework.
- Transformation Board – The transformation programme seeks to embed a culture of continuous change as business as usual and to move towards the city council becoming a learning organisation. The post COVID recovery work is feeding into the programme, assessing how this period has changed service delivery, for example, agile working and channel shift.
- Commissioning and Contract Management Board - looking at commissioning arrangements across the authority and particularly on children’s and adults’ placements.
- Establishment Board - to respond to the human resources elements associated with the delivery and financial challenges faced by the city council and to support delivery of an increasingly effective and productive workforce. This will include monitoring of changes to establishment and agency, consultants and interim staff (through a dedicated sub group).
- Capital and Asset Management Board – to ensure that the city council’s portfolio of significant programmes and projects have been properly tested through a gateway process in terms of deliverability, affordability and VFM and are aligned to strategic objectives and are delivered on time, to quality and to budget.

6.16 In the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) presented to City Council in February 2022, it was assumed that the council would work towards increasing the General Fund non-earmarked reserve to improve financial resilience. The MTFS includes a contribution to the General Reserve of £0.5 million per annum with an aim to hold a minimum balance of circa 5% of the net budget. The budget position for 2022/23 continues to be monitored closely, particularly in relation to the ongoing impact of the coronavirus pandemic and the effect of rising inflation to manage and minimise any risk to the reserve.

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Financial Management Code

- 6.17 In support of strengthening the financial framework, CIPFA has developed the Financial Management Code (FM Code), which sets out the principles by which authorities should be guided in managing their finances and the specific standards that they should, as a minimum, seek to achieve. The FM Code standards covers areas including responsibilities of the CFO / leadership team, governance and financial management, Medium Term Financial Plan and financial resilience assessments, the annual budgeting process and monitoring of financial performance.
- 6.18 The FM Code is designed to be flexible to the nature, needs and circumstances of individual authorities. It is up to each authority to determine the extent to which it complies with the FM Code and to identify what action it may wish to take to better meet the standards that the FM Code sets out. An initial assessment was carried out in early 2021 and the findings indicate that the council are broadly compliant against the FM standards.
- 6.19 Following the initial assessment, further work has been undertaken to improve longer-term planning by extending the MTFS to 5 years in detail and 10 years at a higher level, and scenario planning is also now evident particularly in respect of Children's Services. In addition, to ensure the strength of financial management, reviews are underway of existing systems such as financial regulations; financial controls; training programme for both members and officers etc to ensure they are sufficiently promoted and embedded. Consideration will also be given to national reports, such as those published in the public interest, to learn from others where applicable. During 2022/23, additional resources have been approved to recruit to a new financial assurance team which will focus on the delivery of a programme of review and refresh of all financial processes and procedures across the city council to strengthen the financial environment.

Cyber Security Arrangements

- 6.20 With more and more digitised services and with world events such as Covid-19 and the Russia/Ukraine conflict, cybercrime is very much on the rise. At a recent presentation given to Digital Leaders, the Head of the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) stated a targeted attack against public sector organisations was not a case of 'if' but 'when'. Similar attacks have already taken place at Redcar and the London Borough of Hackney. This is a sobering message and whilst the council can do little to prevent a sophisticated targeted attack, it can do everything possible to not make itself a target, and to mitigate the risk should an attack be successful. Whilst the council are encouraging the community to transact with it digitally, it must ensure these transactions are secure. With this in mind, there is therefore a twin track approach of prevention and mitigation. The council have therefore installed new hardware and software to improve its security capability. The most important weapon in the council's armoury is staff awareness; the weakest point of any security system is usually people, who unlike machines can be coerced to doing something they wouldn't normally do, such as click a link or reveal a password. Cyber Security training for council staff is now mandatory and will be launched later this year. The council are also making structural and operational changes to improve capacity and capability in this area. Whilst the council hope to never

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be successfully compromised by a cyber-attack, it must be planned for. The NCSC have an 'exercise in a box' which the council complete annually to ensure the ICT Team are prepared. The council are also ensuring that Cyber is built into all directorate Business Continuity Plans, so that all functions are prepared to operate without ICT for a sustained period of time.

Other Governance Improvements

- 6.21 The council has a confidential reporting procedure in place which provides a process to encourage people working with the council to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that they are able to raise genuine concerns in good faith without fear of reprisals; their confidentiality will be respected; and their concerns will be taken seriously and properly investigated where appropriate. The number, nature and outcomes of confidential disclosures made to Council officers will be recorded and monitored. During 2021/22 no referrals were made under the confidential reporting procedure. In 2020/21 four referrals were made under the procedure, all of which have now been closed.
- 6.22 Information Governance best practice has continued to develop within the authority with training on cyber security developed. The Information Governance Group continued to develop chaired by the SIRO, Vice-chaired by the Strategic Manager for Information Security and Caldicott Guardian and including the Council's Data Protection Officer and representatives from legal, communications, IT, Information Rights, Learning and Development and each department. The group has now been widened to include data within its remit and is considering how data is used in the council. The group is proving effective in raising the profile of Information Governance and implementing the Information Governance action plan with each directorate now having its own group.
- 6.23 Chief Officer and Deputy Chief Officer declarations of interest have been relaunched and are now available online and reviewed annually, the next stage will see this rolled out for other officers. Similarly work has been completed to review the arrangements with regard to city council owned/influenced entities to ensure that the appropriate ethical walls are observed and the action plan has been fully implemented. There have been significant improvements to officer level governance which has been consolidated and codified within the year with the creation of a number of strategic co-ordinating boards and greater clarity in terms of the decision making pathway for reports.
- 6.24 A review of the complaints process is being undertaken to understand the current approach the council take to complaints and develop an improvement plan looking at all elements including annual reporting, monitoring, escalation, quality control, resourcing and access to information. Additionally, the review will also identify efficiencies in the complaints handling process that will enable complaints / feedback to be logged on-time, in order to see a reduction in the number of overdue complaints. It is also important that this review looks at the approach to dealing with statutory complaints for children's and adults' social care and the Local Government Ombudsman,

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with a view to developing an improvement plan to ensure compliance with statutory processes based on learning from best practice elsewhere.

- 6.25 The city council's financial assessments team's functions include carrying out financial assessments for residential and non Residential care, act as appointees and deputies for adults who lack capacity and direct payments for children and adults. In April 2020 the service transferred from corporate finance to revenues and benefits. Following the transfer of the service, a review of staffing, processes and procedures and internal controls was undertaken. One of the key risks identified within this review related to Court of Protection reconciliation processes and as such focus was concentrated on this area. A number of potential internal control and reconciliation weaknesses were identified that needed to be considered and addressed. Following an internal audit review, an action plan was developed and a full reconciliation of the existing individual accounts commenced. This included new reconciliation procedures being put in to place for new transactions, guidance and training of staff regarding the new processes. A historic reconciliation was also undertaken which included the review of 100,000s of transactions. The council have been in ongoing dialogue with the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) regarding the reconciliation and they have offered their support to the council in addressing the issues and the council will maintain an open dialogue with the OPG as further improvements are undertaken. Plans are underway to ensure all individual Court of Protection clients' fund balances are correct now and going forwards. A transformation project scope for the overall Financial Assessments service is currently being finalised.
- 6.26 The council entered a contractual arrangement with Community Energy Scheme (CES) UK Ltd for them to install solar panels on Stoke-on-Trent's social housing stock and to enter into a contract with tenants for the provision of electricity from these panels. Following a number of complaints about the company's management of the scheme, the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem) are currently undertaking an investigation. The council is not the subject of the investigation, but have done all it can to assist Ofgem in its investigation and await the outcome. Dependent on the outcome this may have operational and financial implications for the Council and CES, both retrospective and forward looking.
- 6.27 The 'People' Commissioning and Contracts Board (covering the Children and Family Services and Adult Social Care, Health Integration and Wellbeing directorates) has run since January 2022. This Board now has oversight of all the contracts sitting within children's, adults and public health. Refinements to the Commissioning and Contracts Board will include a review of delegated financial authority to ensure lower value/risk contracts are signed off at an appropriate level, providing appropriate evidence to the Board to allow oversight and approval. The 'Corporate' Commissioning and Contracts Board (covering Housing Development & Growth and Strategy & Resources directorates) is currently being developed. This is likely to be in place by Autumn 2022 as contracts will be reviewed as the People's Board to allow comparison and oversight.

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- 6.28 The Care Act 2014 places a duty on each Local Authority to establish a Safeguarding Adult Board (SAB) and specifies the responsibilities of the Local Authority and connected partners with whom they work, to protect adults at risk of abuse or neglect. The Board has a broad membership of partners in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent and is Chaired by an Independent Chair appointed by Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council in conjunction with Board members. The role of the Chair was recently advertised and following recruitment and interviews an appointment was not made and the current chair was asked to stay on. The Safeguarding Partnership Board publishes an annual report, and for the first time, the Board have produced a more accessible version produced by young adults supported by Rockspur who are a user led not for profit company providing day opportunities and supported living for younger adults with learning difficulties/disabilities and autism. The board are committed to learning and improving practice and following two Safeguarding Adults Reviews and two large scale enquiries into care homes the board are strengthening its approach to safeguarding by inviting an expert consultant who is a chair of another safeguarding board and a national lead on social work practice to critically assesses the council's adult social care safeguarding arrangements and develop an improvement plan to address any gaps identified.
- 6.29 The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Partnership was established on October 2021, following the decision to have separate safeguarding children arrangements from Staffordshire. Over the last 12 months, the governance structures and processes has been developed with an Executive Board, Quality Assurance Group and sub-groups for Practice Review and Learning and Development established. There has been positive commitment from operational and practice leaders across the partnership. The chairs and vice-chairs of the Quality Assurance Group and sub-groups are shared across the partners and there is consistent and regular attendance from all partner agencies. Under the new arrangements, executive partners have agreed strategic, practice and assurance priorities and a 3-year business plan has been developed to ensure delivery of them. A Quality Assurance and Scrutiny Framework is now in place and its implementation is underway, with Child Exploitation the first scrutiny focus. The Performance Management Framework is in the process of being finalised. A multi-agency training programme has been developed which is responsive to local needs. It is being delivered by a range of partners and incorporates the learning from local and national reviews. The first annual report for the safeguarding children partnership will be published later in the year which will evidence the impact of the work of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies and the effectiveness of the arrangements.
- 6.30 A Progress & Assurance System for Children's Services including a robust programme management approach has been adopted providing detailed senior management line of sight and timely oversight of the large range of project plans which support the overarching Improvement Plan and delivery of key directorate strategies. Supporting this process, a transformation and performance dashboard has been developed and is reported and scrutinised monthly. In addition, a range of panels are in place which are chaired by the Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Strategic Manager for Corporate Parenting which consider voluntary entry to

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care arrangements under s20 of the Children Act 1989, permanence planning for children, external residential placements, and placements which require funding support from the CCG. All risk assessments and team plans are fully up to date, and we are in the process of reviewing the membership, function and join-up of our key partnership boards.

- 6.31 Due to the pressures identified in the High Needs Block funding and the need to manage the safety valve savings, the council have created a High Needs Board. The DfE approved a safety valve payment of £10 million which will be paid to the city council over a 4 year period (£9.1 million to reduce the deficit and £0.9 million capacity funding). This is subject to compliance and satisfactory progress with certain conditions set. The overall deficit on DSG as at 31 March 2022 was £20.3 million. The Board meets regularly to analyse the expenditure and the impact on vulnerable learners of any realignments of funding. The Board also oversee the match of funding to need in order to meet statutory duties for vulnerable learners. The new Inclusion Board monitors the statutory duty with regard to learners with SEND and those who are vulnerable and in need of additional/ specialist support. Preparing for Ofsted inspections, multi-agency working, funding, expenditure, provision, co-production of alternative provision, transition and quality of provision all form part of the work of the Board.
- 6.32 The new Education Challenge Board (ECB) is a citywide partnership to provide challenge and support to all education providers, regardless of their designation. The Board has an independent chair and has identified some key priorities for the City. A small amount of dedicated funding has enabled the Board to engage 4 NLEs (National Leaders of Education) to support initial education data analysis and a short term consultant to strengthen the partnership and communication with all schools. Once the data sharing exercise is complete, more targeted initiatives will emerge to raise attainment and remove barriers to learning for children and young people in Stoke on Trent.
- 6.33 The city council currently has a number of entities in which it has an interest either as an owner, shareholder or as a member. These include Fortior Homes Ltd; Unitas Stoke-on-Trent Ltd; Stoke-on-Trent Regeneration Ltd; Stoke Energy Co Ltd and Rhead Homes Ltd. The latter two companies are dormant. Fortior and Unitas play an important role for the city council in not only providing financial return and delivering services, but also in terms of delivering city council objectives and as users of city council supplied services. The city council wants these ventures to be successful, however, they do come with a degree of risk. The city council needs to ensure it has robust processes and arrangements in place to protect its interests and to ensure that, as shareholder and lender, the city council can be assured the companies are effectively managed. Local Partnerships were commissioned to carry out a short independent review of city council owned / influenced entities and the city council's arrangements with regard to them. The review made a number of recommendations to the city council which have now been addressed which included:

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- A single corporate shareholder group for all city council owned/ influenced entities, responsible for protecting the city council's interest, liaising with the city council owned/ influenced entities and providing consent via the shareholder representative as required.
- A commercial board, as a mechanism to review the implementation of the city council's commercial approach including the entities it influences and owns.
- The establishment of a client/customer role for each entity.
- A change of reporting line for the Managing Director of Unitas to the Unitas Board.
- Implementation of a conflicts ring-fencing procedure.
- A review of the city council nominations to boards, beginning with changes to the Councillor representation which is dealt with in this report and a request to the Unitas Board to amend its board composition accordingly.
- A review of board compositions, skills gap analysis, training and creation of role profiles.
- Review of the objectives of city council owned/influenced entities, other than Fortior which has already been clarified.
- Adoption of a unified risk based approach with regard to city council owned/ influenced entities.
- A review of the tax arrangements by an independent tax expert to ensure compliance and efficiency of all entities where the city council has an interest.

6.34 In the 2021 Autumn Statement, the Chancellor confirmed that the city council had been successful in bidding for three Levelling-Up Fund (LUF) projects to support the regeneration of the city. The successful bids are towards the delivery of the following schemes:

- £20m of LUF funding towards the Etruscan Square mixed-use development in the City Centre, delivering new homes, commercial space, a new multi-storey car park, an indoor arena with a capacity of 3,600, and a hotel.
- £16m of LUF funding towards the Goods Yard mixed-use development situated adjacent to Stoke-on-Trent railway station, the A500 and the Trent and Mersey canal at a key gateway into the City, delivering new homes, commercial space and a hotel.
- £20m of LUF funding to transform three heritage assets in the City, creating new homes in Crown Works (Longton), Spode Works and Tunstall Library & Baths.

6.35 These three regeneration schemes will help to drive the transformation of the city, and are now moving quickly towards the implementation stage. The governance of the schemes is being overseen by the Levelling-Up Board, chaired by the Leader, and attended by the Deputy Leader, City Director, Section 151 Officer, the Director of Housing, Development & Growth and other senior officers from across the Council.

6.36 The council have a put into place a formal Project Management Office (PMO) to ensure that its large transformation programme and the high volume of projects across multiple service directorates are effectively managed. The PMO can also help to control project costs through resource allocation and maintain transparency by serving as a conduit for communication. The PMO is responsible for

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upskilling existing staff and ensuring best practice adoption across the organisation. The PMO has introduced the following continuous improvement steps to enhance project governance:

- A Central PMO site established for all staff to access standard corporate project management tools and templates and that we will now build on this
- Agreed and approved Gateway Approval Process for the Capital programme
- Implementing Surety reviews of projects

For major projects such as Levelling up and the council's ambitious energy from waste programme, project governance arrangements including risk management and board structures have been developed . External legal and finance due diligence is also being sourced as required.

- 6.37 The council has deliberately chosen to pursue a very practical approach to tackling the climate emergency by identifying and pursuing individual programmes and projects that it considers can make the biggest difference, particularly with respect to energy generation and efficiency, public transport, air quality and tree planting. Addressing climate change is a requirement of all Cabinet members through their portfolios and all relevant council strategies, plans and programmes. Work is ongoing to deliver the efficiencies linked to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme and the associated funding that the council have been able to secure. Identifying further opportunities to make efficiencies and reduce carbon remains a challenge. As the council and government agenda and policy evolves around net zero, the council will continue to deliver decarbonisation projects which will be configured into a city wide approach to net zero in the future.
- 6.38 The City Council asked the Local Government Association (LGA) to organise a Corporate Peer Review of the council and this took place from 23rd to 26th May 2022. The review will provide the council with an important set of insights from sector peers to help us on our improvement journey. The peers act as a critical friend and challenge the council where appropriate, providing an objective, outside point of view of our operations. The report is expected to be available June/July and the findings will be used to inform range of actions to continue with the improvements to the way the city council operates.

Community Safety

- 6.39 The Community Safety Strategy identifies the following five partnership priorities for the city:
1. Tackling crimes which have the most impact on our communities – including Anti-Social Behaviour, Criminal Damage, Drug Supply and Public Space Violence
 2. Preventing Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults from being exploited, by addressing Serious Violence and Modern Slavery
 3. Keeping people safe in their own homes by tackling Domestic Abuse and Sexual Abuse

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4. Reducing repeat and persistent offending
5. Building community resilience through place-based problem solving

- 6.40 A supporting delivery plan with identified thematic leads and performance framework is well developed and thematic leads provide regular progress updates to the Community Safety Partnership Board against each priority. Strategic and operational partnership arrangements have continued to develop and improve. Community Safety staff now attend daily briefings with police colleagues, fortnightly Local Partnership Meetings and chair monthly Tasking Meetings with a wide range of partners and other stakeholders which focus on high demand locations across the city. These processes enable speedier identification of issues, decision making and resource allocation, facilitating diversion into support or enforcement action where appropriate. Closer working arrangements and relationships have been developed with Homeless, Drug Treatment and those services that support individuals with complex needs that generate community and community safety concerns
- 6.41 Following further successful bids from the Home Office Safer Streets Fund situational crime and ASB prevention initiatives have been delivered in Hanley City Centre. This has included the provision of new and enhanced street lighting, alley gating and CCTV. Work has also been undertaken across many of the Greenways in the city and significant enhancements have been made to lighting and CCTV provision in Longton Park in support of the Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls agenda. When compared to our most similar group of local authorities our position in terms of total recorded crime and violent crime has continued to improve. We have moved from 9th out of 15 in December 2017, to 4th best in relation recorded crime and from 11th out of 15 in December 2017, to 4th best in relation to violent crime in the last release of national performance data released in March 22. Over the most recent twelve months a further 8% reduction has also been achieved in relation to reported incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour. This is in addition to the significant reductions achieved in previous years.

7. Significant Governance Issues


- 7.1 In 2021/22 no further significant governance issues were identified other than those included in this statement. All findings of regulatory inspections received during the period covered by this statement are being addressed and progress will be reported at regular intervals through the appropriate committee.

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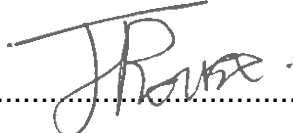
8. Declaration by City Council

- 8.1 We have been advised on the results of the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework by the Audit Committee. The city council continues to develop plans to ensure continuous improvement of the arrangements are in place and these will continue to be enhanced.
- 8.2 Over the coming year, we will continue to strengthen the city council's governance arrangements and will monitor the implementation of recommendations to improve and enhance the arrangements as part of our next annual review.

Signed:


..... Leader of the Council: Cllr Jane Ashworth (from 25th May 2023)

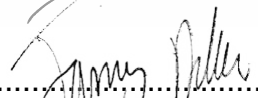
Date:


..... City Director: Jon Rouse

Date:


..... Section 151 Officer: Nick Edmonds

Date:


..... Monitoring Officer: James Doble

Date:

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APPENDIX 1

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

Ref	How we can demonstrate that the city council meets this principle	Evidence
PA.1	<p>The city council promotes high standards of ethical behaviour by developing, maintaining and monitoring a Code of Conduct for Members of the city council. The Code of Conduct clearly sets out the standards expected for elected Councillors to ensure they operate in a clear, transparent manner and treat each other, and members of the public, with respect and courtesy. The Code and the city council’s policies and procedures are communicated via corporate induction sessions and are available on the city council’s intranet site.</p>	<p>Members Code of Conduct & Staff Code of Conduct are included in the city council’s Constitution</p> <p><u>Constitution</u></p>
PA.2	<p>The Codes of Conduct for Members and city council employees include the requirement to disclose interests (including statutory Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) and to declare gifts and hospitality. The Members Gifts and Hospitality Register is available on the city council’s website on the Transparency pages.</p>	<p><u>Councillor’s Register of Interests</u></p>
PA.3	<p>Comprising of nine councillors, allocated on the basis of the political composition of the council, the city council’s Standards Committee is responsible for helping Members to adhere to the Members Code of Conduct and promoting other elements of sound ethical behaviour.</p> <p>The Committee, in conjunction with the Monitoring Officer, deals with complaints against Members and this may involve the undertaking of investigations or some other form of action being taken, such as additional training. The Committee also issues (and updates) local codes of guidance from time to time, such as a Code on Criminal Records Bureau checks and guidance on dealing with planning and licensing determinations.</p>	<p><u>Standards Committee</u></p> <p><u>Modern Day Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2022</u></p>

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<p>PA.4</p>	<p>The city council has an established Procurement Process Guide in place to ensure an ethical and robust process. This enables a clear and documented end to end procurement process that supports probity, provides effective stewardship of public funds and meets the needs of the business.</p>	<p><u>Procurement Process Guide</u></p>
<p>PA.5</p>	<p>The city council has an established corporate compliments, comments and complaints process. In the event that the procedure is exhausted, the Ombudsman is required to carry out an investigation into a complaint.</p> <p>The Ombudsman's Annual letter is published on the LGO's own website.</p>	<p><u>Compliments, Comments and Complaints Process</u></p> <p><u>Ombudsman Annual Letter 2021</u></p>
<p>PA.6</p>	<p>The city council has a Counter-Fraud & Error Strategy as well as a Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing) Procedure to ensure that members and employees of the authority are not influenced by prejudice, bias or conflicts of interest in dealing with different stakeholders. The Audit Committee receives regular update reports outlining progress in implementing key anti-fraud actions to protect the city council's interests.</p>	<p><u>Statement on Countering Fraud, Corruption and Error</u></p> <p><u>Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing) Procedure</u></p>
<p>PA.7</p>	<p>In response to the Covid-19 emergency situation a full analysis of all changes to legislation has been produced and circulated to senior officers. Changes were also made to the city council's constitution to respond to the emergency situation to enable decision making to continue was agreed by full city council on 26th March 2020.</p>	<p>Covid-19 Legislation Schedule (internal document only)</p> <p><u>Amendments to Part 2 and Part 3 of the city council's Constitution</u></p>

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Principle B – Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Ref	How we can demonstrate that the city council meets this principle	Evidence
PB.1	The city council publishes its decisions on its website; on this page you can find a record of executive decisions made under the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations	Notice of Decisions
PB.2	The city council is committed to openness and transparency. Meeting items are only discussed in private if they absolutely cannot be discussed in any other way ³ . City council and Cabinet Meetings are broadcast live on the internet, and are available online to be watched after the event.	City council Meeting Webcasts Cabinet & City Council Meetings
PB.3	<p>The city council places communications at the centre of all that it does. The communications strategy which is underpinned by the city council's Stronger Together vision sets out an approach which aims to improve communications with local people as well as a number of key stakeholders across the city through a series of pre-agreed campaigns. This approach proactively supports engaging local people and stakeholders in democracy and city council services in a number of ways across a number of digital and more traditional channels.</p> <p>The city council's Community Cohesion Strategy has been developed taking into account the views of young people and consultation with statutory, voluntary and community partners.</p>	<p>Corporate Communication Strategies Quarterly Priorities are agreed with Cabinet Leads, the City Director and Directors (internal only)</p> Community Cohesion Strategy 2020-2024
PB.4	The city council has an established customer feedback procedure which enables those in the City to engage with the organisation and offer ideas, suggestions, compliments and complaints. The Annual Customer Feedback Report for 2019/20 was published in December 2020 and shows a reduction in the number of stage one complaints received and a reduction in the number of statutory complaints about social care services for the third year running. The 2020/21 and 2021/22 reports are due to be presented to Cabinet on 27 th September 2022.	Customer Feedback Procedure Customer Service Strategy 2021 - 2024 Annual Customer Feedback Report 2019/2020

³ Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

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<p>PB.5</p>	<p>The City Council Operating Plan for 2021/2022 has been reported to the Cabinet on the delivery of the priorities and objectives of the Stronger Together Strategic Plan 2020-2024.</p>	<p><u>Stronger Together Priorities</u></p> <p><u>Operating Plan 2021-2022</u></p> <p>Operating Plan 2021-2022 (Updates provided to Cabinet Internal only)</p>
<p>PB.6</p>	<p>The city council communicates through its website regarding the city council's vision, achievements, financial position and performance. The website has recently been redeveloped to provide the public with easier access to information and services. Various parts of the organisation use a variety of social media, including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, google+, Pinterest and Flickr to engage and inform communities and stakeholders. The Communications Team also provides related media releases, where appropriate.</p> <p>The City Council continues to produce brief weekly news updates which include headline stories and important corporate information, the bulletin - called Our Week – is emailed to staff every Wednesday. There is also be a fortnightly Our Learning bulletin providing up-to-date training, development and learning information and an Our Wellbeing newsletter including all the latest health and wellbeing opportunities available to staff.</p>	<p><u>Stoke-on-Trent City Council Website Including Coronavirus Updates</u></p> <p><u>Facebook</u></p> <p><u>Face book live questions and answers</u></p> <p><u>Main News Page</u></p> <p>Our Week (internal document only)</p> <p>Our Learning (internal document only)</p> <p>Our Wellbeing (internal document only)</p>

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<p>PB.7</p>	<p>Engaging with our communities is essential to ensure that we are a resident led authority. Consultation exercises are carried out as required; for example, consultation on the Budget has become a regular component of the budget setting process. Consultation meetings were held across the Medium-term Financial Strategy period to consult on the budget proposals.</p> <p>The city council also conducted a number of online consultations in the year including the rights of way improvement plan; how do you use your chemist; elective home education policy, social workers survey to support carers and when would you like to shop at our markets.</p>	<p><u>Budget Consultation 2022-2023</u></p>
<p>PB.8</p>	<p>Enhancing the accountability for service delivery and effectiveness of other public service providers is demonstrated through the reporting mechanisms for joint arrangements, such as the Health and Well Being Board, Adult Strategic Partnership, CYS Partnership, Responsible Authorities Group and the Youth Offending Service Board, - all of whom deliver services in partnership with Staffordshire PCT, Staffordshire Police, Probation Services and the city council. The city council works in close partnership with the Stoke and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership to develop investment and business growth across the region.</p>	<p><u>Health and Wellbeing Board</u> <u>Stoke-on-Trent Adults' Strategic Partnership</u> <u>Safeguarding Children's Board</u> <u>Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board</u> <u>Stoke and Staffs LEP Partnership</u></p>
<p>PB.9</p>	<p>Directors of Public Health in England have a statutory duty to produce an annual report outlining the health of their local population. During 2021, Public Health remained top of everyone's agenda as the City continued to respond to unprecedented challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic and reaffirmed the Council's commitment to improving the health of our city and reducing inequalities.</p>	<p><u>Director of Public Health Annual Report 2021</u></p>

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

Ref	How we can demonstrate that the city council meets this principle	Evidence
PC.1	<p>In January 2020, the city council agreed the strategic vision for the period from 2020 to 2024. The new vision comprises five priorities and 25 strategic objectives and was been developed in consultation with Cabinet. The vision is the basis for a more detailed strategic plan for 2021/22.</p>	<p><u>Stronger Together Priorities 2020-2024</u></p> <p><u>Operating Plan 2021-2022</u></p> <p><u>Strategic Performance & Framework 2020 (A)</u></p> <p><u>Strategic Measure Target Setting 2021/2024</u></p>
PC.2	<p>The Stronger Together Strategic Plan provides a clear vision for Stoke-on-Trent, to create a city we can all be proud of. This vision is underpinned by five priorities which guide everything the city council does:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support our residents to fulfil their potential; • Support our businesses to thrive, delivering investment in our towns and communities; • Work with residents to make out towns and communities great places to live; • A commercial council, well governed and fit for purpose, driving efficiency in everything we do; • Support vulnerable people in our communities to live their lives well. <p>Sitting underneath the five priorities are 29 strategic objectives which describe the areas where the organisation will drive change over the next four years. To guide the delivery of our priorities and objectives there are five cross cutting values. They describe how we will work and how we would like to work with others, across organisational and geographical boundaries.</p>	<p><u>Strategic Measures Q1 2021/2022 (1)</u> <u>Strategic Measures Q1 2021/2022 (2)</u></p> <p><u>Strategic Measures Q2 2021/2022 (1)</u> <u>Strategic Measures Q2 2021/2022 (2)</u></p> <p><u>Strategic Measures Q3 2021/2022 (1)</u> <u>Strategic Measures Q3 2021/2022 (2)</u></p> <p><u>Strategic Measures Q4 2021/2022 (1)</u> <u>Strategic Measures Q4 2021/2022 (2)</u></p> <p><u>Medium Term Financial Strategy & Council Tax Setting 2021/2022</u></p> <p><u>Medium Term Financial Strategy & Council Tax Setting 2022/2023</u></p>

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<p>PC.3</p>	<p>The city council has adopted in full CIPFA’s Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities and their Treasury Management Code of Practice. The city council receives specialist support from Arlingclose on all aspects of borrowing, lending and investments.</p> <p>Reserves strategy and forecasts are clearly set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy and are monitored through the quarterly Finance updates. Opportunities for strengthening the reserves position are routinely considered as part of the account closure exercise. The revenue budget is set and will be reviewed on a regular basis.</p>	<p><u>Capital Investment Programme Update 2020/2021 - 2025/2026</u> <u>Capital Investment Programme Update 2020/2021 - 2025/2026 (App A)</u> <u>Capital Investment Programme Update 2020/2021 - 2025/2026 (App B)</u> <u>Capital Investment Programme Update 2020/2021 - 2025/2026 (App C)</u></p> <p><u>Medium Term Financial Strategy & Council Tax Setting 2021/2022</u></p> <p><u>Medium Term Financial Strategy & Council Tax Setting 2022/2023</u> <u>CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice 2021/2022</u></p>
<p>PC.4</p>	<p>The annual report on the Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22, incorporating the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement, Investment Strategy and Prudential and Treasury Indicators 2021/22 required under Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003 was approved by city council in February 2021 (having been considered by the Audit Committee).</p> <p>Member awareness and engagement on Treasury Management issues is progressed through development events and regular updates.</p>	<p><u>Treasury Management Annual Borrowing and Investment Strategy & Minimum Provision Policy 2021/2022</u></p> <p><u>Treasury Management Annual Borrowing & Investment Strategy & Minimum Provision Policy 22/23</u></p>

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PC.5

The council have produced a one-year Asset Management Plan to set out the continuing work of Asset Maximisation and brings together the priorities for delivery for operational property, the accommodation strategies and plans and how the decisions taken to drive these also provide a greater level of opportunity for physical regeneration within the City.

Asset Management Plan 2021

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

Ref	How we can demonstrate that the city council meets this principle	Evidence
PD.1	<p>Financial and non-financial performance reports are presented on a monthly basis at Senior Management Team Meetings (SMT) and taken to Cabinet each quarter.</p> <p>The content of the reports demonstrates the city council’s progress in achieving against the performance measures and budgets across city council activities and are used to highlight examples of excellence in service delivery, as well as monitoring areas requiring improvement. Reports are also provided to Overview and Scrutiny Committees for each respective service area.</p>	<p><u>Financial Performance Q1 2021/2022</u></p> <p><u>Financial Performance Q2 2021/2022</u> <u>Financial Performance Q2 2021/2022 App A</u> <u>Financial Performance Q2 2021/2022 Annex A</u> <u>Financial Performance Q2 2021/2022 Annex B</u> <u>Financial Performance Q2 2021/2022 Annex Ci</u> <u>Financial Performance Q2 2021/2022 Annex Cii</u></p> <p><u>Financial Performance Report Q3 2021/2022</u> <u>Financial Performance Q3 2021/2022 Annex A</u> <u>Financial Performance Q3 2021/2022 Annex B</u> <u>Financial Performance Q3 2021/2022 Annex Ci</u> <u>Financial Performance Q3 2021/2022 Annex Cii</u></p> <p><u>Financial Performance 2021-22 Provisional Outturn Appendix A</u> <u>Financial Performance 2021 - 22 Provisional Outturn Annex A.</u> <u>Financial Performance 2021-22 Provisional Outturn Annex B.</u> <u>Financial Performance 2021-22 Provisional Outturn Annex Ci.</u> <u>Financial Performance 2021-22 Provisional Outturn Annex Cii.</u> <u>Financial Performance 2021-22 Provisional Outturn Annex Ciii.</u></p>

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	<p>The city council monitors a set of strategic measures to understand performance against the Stronger Together priorities. The Strategic Measures are reported to the Senior Management Team (SMT), Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny on a quarterly basis and are refreshed annually to ensure they remain up to date and relevant. SMT consider corporate health performance information on a monthly basis which includes customer feedback, sickness absence & HR data, health & safety and customer services information. Key Directorate KPIs are also reviewed on a monthly basis with a focus on a specific directorate each month. The city council continues to work with partners and reports performance on a quarterly basis to various boards including Health & Wellbeing Board and Children & Young Peoples Strategic Partnership Board.</p>	<p><u>Strategic Measures Q1 2021/2022 (1)</u> <u>Strategic Measures Q1 2021/2022 (2)</u> <u>Strategic Measures Q2 2021/2022 (1)</u> <u>Strategic Measures Q2 2021/2022 (2)</u> <u>Strategic Measures Q3 2021/2022 (1)</u> <u>Strategic Measures Q3 2021/2022 (2)</u> <u>Strategic Measures Q4 2021/2022 (1)</u> <u>Strategic Measures Q4 2021/2022 (2)</u></p> <p><u>Strategic Measure Target Setting 2021/2024</u></p> <p><u>Treasury Management Q3 Review 2021/2022</u></p> <p><u>Overview & Scrutiny Committees</u></p>
<p>PD.2</p>	<p>In determining the courses of action to take decisions are informed by the city council's strategic priorities and objectives (its strategy and key performance indicators) which subsequently inform a clear planning methodology and long term direction for its business activities. To support this, the city council ensures it has an adequate and all-inclusive budget process.</p>	<p><u>Medium Term Financial Strategy & Council Tax Setting 2021/2022</u></p> <p><u>Medium Term Financial Strategy & Council Tax Setting 2022/2023</u></p> <p><u>Strategic Measures Q1 2021/2022 (1)</u> <u>Strategic Measures Q1 2021/2022 (2)</u> <u>Strategic Measures Q2 2021/2022 (1)</u> <u>Strategic Measures Q2 2021/2022 (2)</u> <u>Strategic Measures Q3 2021/2022 (1)</u> <u>Strategic Measures Q3 2021/2022 (2)</u> <u>Strategic Measures Q4 2021/2022 (1)</u> <u>Strategic Measures Q4 2021/2022 (2)</u></p>

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<p>PD.3</p>	<p>A Housing Strategy has been created to enhance Stoke-on-Trent’s housing offer so that people at all stages of life can find and live in a quality home they want at a price they can afford.</p>	<p><u>Housing Strategy 2022-27</u> <u>Housing Revenue Account Asset Management Strategy</u></p>
<p>PD.4</p>	<p>“Making Stoke-on-Trent a digitally inclusive city”. Enabling more people to access the internet has the potential to transform the way in which citizens access local services and make choices about aspects of their own lives, while simultaneously reducing demand for key services.</p>	<p><u>Digital Strategy 2021-2024</u></p>
<p>PD.5</p>	<p>Our vision is for Stoke-on-Trent to be a vibrant, healthy and caring city which supports its citizens to live more fulfilling, independent and healthy lives. Our objective is to promote personal responsibility, early intervention and independence by involving communities in the way our services are shaped. We will encourage community leadership, a strong focus on efficiency, value for money and ease of access to services.</p>	<p><u>Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021 - 2025</u> <u>Joint Dementia Strategy 2021-2024</u></p>
<p>PD.6</p>	<p>A set of Equality Objectives for the city council for the period 2021-2024 have been developed.</p>	<p><u>Equality Objectives 2021-2024</u> <u>Equality and Diversity Strategy</u></p>

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

Ref	How we can demonstrate that the city council meets this principle	Evidence	
PE.1	The city council participates in multiple benchmarking exercises and uses the information for financial and service quality comparisons. Learning from other entities enables the city council to achieve value for money and best practice service delivery.	Benchmarking	
PE.2	The city council has four statutory ⁴ posts with responsibility for governance.	Statutory / Mandatory posts	Post within current structure
		Head of Paid Service	City Director
		Chief Financial Officer and s151 Officer	Director of Strategy & Resources
		Monitoring Officer	Assistant Director Governance & Registrars
		Senior Information Risk Owner	Assistant Director Governance & Registrars

⁴ There are other statutory roles, including the Director of Children’s Services and the Caldicott Guardian, currently held by the Assistant Director – Commissioning, Health and Social Care

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<p>PE.3</p>	<p>The Constitution sets out a Scheme of Delegation, Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules.</p> <p>The Scheme of Delegation gives officers authority to act within the policies and objectives defined by the executive and the city council as a whole. The scheme has been extended to Assistant Directors and work continues to extend further to Strategic Managers. The Financial Regulations underpin the effective management of the city council’s financial arrangements and the Contract Procedure Rules govern the making of contracts for and on behalf of the city council.</p> <p>The city council’s Constitution sets out the framework for decision making and the formal reporting of those decisions. Decision making is underpinned by a framework of policies, plans and strategies. These are referred to as the Budget and Policy Framework and are identified within the Constitution. The Constitution is kept under review by the Assistant Director - Governance, (the city council’s Monitoring Officer).</p> <p>These documents are comprehensively reviewed on a regular basis by the Constitution Working Group with amendments being approved by full city council.</p>	<p><u>Constitution</u></p>
<p>PE.4</p>	<p>For our elected Members, the city council produces an annual Learning and Development Plan supported by a calendar of training events and workshops. These continued to adhere to the best practice guidelines given in the Local Government Association’s Member Development Charter.</p>	<p>Councillor Induction Plan 2019-23 (Internal only) <u>Role of a Councillor</u></p>

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PE.5	<p>In compliance with the data transparency code, the city council has published its senior management structure and pay structure.</p> <p>The city council publishes an annual pay policy, last approved by city council in February 2021. 25/02/2021</p> <p>Information is also provided about member’s remuneration.</p>	<p><u>Pay Policy Statement 2021-2022</u></p> <p><u>Members Allowances 2021/2022</u></p>
PE.6	<p>The city council recognises that its employees are central to its success. Training for staff is developed via information from annual P.L.A.N - Progress, Learning, Actions, Nurture. The employee performance framework exists to promote performance and identify development needs. A revised performance appraisal process is currently being developed.</p> <p>Staff also undertake a range of compulsory e-learning on topics such as health and safety and data protection.</p> <p>A leadership events took place in March and June 2022 with further planned throughout 2022/23. These events were led by the City Director for all Senior Managers and included a variety of management tops and information sharing.</p>	<p>P.L.A.N – Progress, Learning, Actions, Nurture</p> <p>E-learning Programme</p> <p>Stronger Together Management Programme</p>

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

Ref	How we can demonstrate that the city council meets this principle	Evidence
PF.1	<p>The Management of Risk Policy sets out the city council’s strategy for ensuring that effective risk management is embedded within all areas of the city council’s operations. It also requires that all managers and Councillors address the issue of associated risk whilst making any and all policy decisions. The Audit Committee reviews the Strategic Risk Register annually.</p> <p>The system of internal control is designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the city council’s policies, aims and objectives and to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.</p>	<p><u>Strategic Risk Register</u></p> <p><u>Management of Risk Policy</u></p>
PF.2	<p>The city council’s Financial Management arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA statement on the role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2016). Information on the financial performance of the city council provided to budget managers and senior officers is well presented, timely, complete and accurate. Real time desk top budget information is available to budget holders across the city council.</p>	<p><u>Financial Performance Q1 2021/2022</u> <u>Financial Performance Q2 2021/2022</u> <u>Financial Performance Q2 2021/2022 App A</u> <u>Financial Performance Q2 2021/2022 Annex A</u> <u>Financial Performance Q2 2021/2022 Annex B</u> <u>Financial Performance Q2 2021/2022 Annex Ci</u> <u>Financial Performance Q2 2021/2022 Annex Cii</u> <u>Financial Performance Report Q3 2021/2022</u> <u>Financial Performance Q3 2021/2022 Annex A</u> <u>Financial Performance Q3 2021/2022 Annex B</u> <u>Financial Performance Q3 2021/2022 Annex Ci</u> <u>Financial Performance Q3 2021/2022 Annex Cii</u></p> <p><u>Financial Performance 2021-22 Provisional Outturn Appendix A</u> <u>Financial Performance 2021 - 22 Provisional Outturn Annex A.</u> <u>Financial Performance 2021-22 Provisional Outturn Annex B.</u> <u>Financial Performance 2021-22 Provisional Outturn Annex Ci.</u></p>

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		<p><u>Financial Performance 2021-22 Provisional Outturn Annex Cii.</u> <u>Financial Performance 2021-22 Provisional Outturn Annex Ciii.</u></p> <p><u>Strategic Measures Q2 2021/2022 (1)</u> <u>Strategic Measures Q2 2021/2022 (2)</u> <u>Strategic Measures Q3 2021/2022</u> <u>Strategic Measures Q3 2021/2022 (2)</u> <u>Strategic Measures Q4 2021/2022 (1)</u> <u>Strategic Measures Q4 2021/2022 (2)</u></p> <p><u>Treasury Management Annual Report 2021 - 2022 & Q1 Performance</u></p>
<p>PF.3</p>	<p>The city council's policies and staff training programme promote compliance with information legislation. To support this, data protection courses have been further updated for both officers and councillors. Training for senior managers is complete and relevant policies are in place in line with current legislation. We comply with standards for public sector data handling and security and have achieved Public Services Network certification every year since its launch. The city council has met the standards required by the new NHS Data Security and Protection Toolkit.</p> <p>The city council is a signatory to the One Staffordshire county-wide information sharing protocol to ensure that when data is shared with our partners it is done in a transparent, compliant and consistent way.</p>	<p>Data Protection Policy (Internal only)</p> <p>Data Sharing Policy (Internal only)</p> <p>Information Governance Policy (Internal only)</p>

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<p>PF.4</p>	<p>The city council’s review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directorate assurance based on management information, performance information, officer assurance statements and Scrutiny reports • The work undertaken by Internal Audit during the year. • The work undertaken by the External Auditor reported in their annual audit and inspection letter. • Other work undertaken by independent inspection bodies. <p>In February 2018 an external review of the internal audit function was undertaken by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). The review gave the city council’s internal audit service the highest category of “Generally Conforms” to the requirements of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and those of the Local Government Application Note.</p>	<p><u>Internal Audit Monitoring Q1 21/22</u> <u>Internal Audit Monitoring Q2 21/22</u> <u>Internal Audit Monitoring Q3 21/22</u></p> <p><u>External Review of Internal Audit</u></p>
<p>PF.5</p>	<p>The city council has a Corporate Strategy for the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption. A key area of work during 2021/22 continues to be Housing Tenancy Fraud and in particular Right to Buy where the implementation of enhanced due diligence checks and robust anti-money laundering controls have been hugely successful in preventing non bona fide Right to Buy applications thereby protecting the public purse. Results of fraud investigations are publicised on the internet using the city council’s social media presence and also in the local media to promote the city council’s ‘Zero Tolerance Against Fraud’ approach.</p> <p>The city council participates in the National Fraud Initiative (NFI), this is a range of annual and biennial data matching exercises led by the Cabinet Office that matches electronic data within and between public and private sector bodies to prevent and detect fraud. Regular updates on these exercises are provided to the Audit Committee.</p>	<p><u>Statement on Countering Fraud, Corruption and Error</u></p> <p>National Fraud Initiative</p> <p><u>Staffordshire Fraud Partnership</u></p>

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

Ref	How we can demonstrate that the city council meets this principle	Evidence
PG.1	<p>In line with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, the city council is required to publish certain types of information for transparency purposes, This information can be found on the city council’s website along with monthly Transparency Reports.</p> <p>A record of executive decisions made under the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 are published on the city councils website. Information is also provided about member’s remuneration.</p>	<p><u>Transparency Report Feb 2022</u></p> <p><u>Members Allowances 2021/2022</u></p> <p><u>Notice of Decisions</u></p>
PG.2	<p>The city council operates a number of Overview and Scrutiny Committees that consist of Elected Members who undertake annual work programmes. The Overview and Scrutiny Committees are aligned to the directorates within the city council. Their two main functions are to hold decision makers to account and to also develop and review policy.</p>	<p><u>Overview & Scrutiny</u></p>
PG.3	<p>The Statement of Accounts is published and produced in compliance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 presenting a true and fair view of the financial performance of the city council in the delivery of services to the citizens of Stoke-on-Trent. The accounts are subject to independent external audit and are made available via the city council’s website. This is seen as an essential feature of public accountability and stewardship as it provides an annual report on how the city council has used the public funds for which it is responsible.</p>	<p><u>Published Accounts 2018/2019</u></p>

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<p>PG.4</p>	<p>The Audit Committee has responsibility for conducting an annual review of the effectiveness of the governance framework, including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness will be informed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ City council officers, responsible for the development and maintenance of the governance environment □ The Strategic Manager, Audit and Fraud’s annual report □ Comments and observations made by external auditors and external review agencies and inspectors. <p>The Committee also report on their activities to full council.</p>	<p><u>Roles & Responsibilities 2020</u></p> <p><u>Audit Committee Annual Report 2020/2021</u></p>
<p>PG.5</p>	<p>The city council’s assurance arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the role of the Head of Internal Audit (2020). Information on the work of Internal Audit is provided to managers and senior officers and is well presented, complete and accurate. Summary reports are provided to the Audit Committee on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>The annual report of the Strategic Manager, Audit and Fraud summarises the audit work undertaken during 2021/2022. Where recommendations have been made to improve processes these are being addressed by appropriate officers. From the work undertaken in 2021/2022 by Internal Audit, the Strategic Manager, Audit and Fraud was able to give the following assurance:</p> <p><i>“From the work carried out by Internal Audit during 2021/22, it has been concluded that the level of assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of the city council’s control environment is Satisfactory.”</i></p>	<p><u>Internal Audit Charter</u></p> <p><u>Internal Audit Annual Report 2021/2022</u></p>
<p>PG.6</p>	<p>In response to the Covid-19 emergency situation a revised governance structure was put into place that was communicated to all staff. This consisted of a Gold Command for strategic decisions lead by the City Director and a Silver Command for operational tasks led by the Assistant Director - Housing and Community Safety as the Business Continuity lead.</p>	<p><u>Covid-19 Governance structure (Internal only)</u> <u>Coronavirus Recovery Framework</u></p> <p><u>Coronavirus Governance Structure (App 1)</u></p> <p><u>Coronavirus Recovery Framework (App 2)</u></p>

Stoke-on-Trent City Council Annual Governance Statement - Annex (September 2024)

Introduction

- A1 Due to the delay in signing the 2021/22 accounts and Annual Governance Statement, details of significant developments relating to the council's governance arrangements are provided in the following paragraphs.

External Inspections

- A2 In October 2022, Ofsted undertook a full inspection of our local authority children's services (ILACS). During a three-week, in-depth inspection, Ofsted reviewed the impact of leaders on social work practice; the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection; and children in care and care leavers. The result of the inspection was an overall effectiveness of requires improvement to be good. This represents significant and sustained progress since our last full inspection in 2019. The inspection found many areas of strength, including our re-designed front door, our support for children who are being exploited or missing from care, and our services for children in care and care leavers which were rated good.
- A3 The council's improvement journey continues and will be overseen by regular meetings of the Children's Improvement Board, chaired by our Children's Commissioner, so that we remain on track with progress. We will continue to seek support from the Department for Education and learn from areas with good practice. The council are currently revising our continuous improvement plan to draw on learning from the inspection findings and to identify the steps needed so we can progress to good. Focus areas in this plan will include embedding and sustaining consistent and high quality practice, improving recruitment and retention of staff, and work to provide sufficiency of local services to sustainably meet demand.
- A4 The council's next full ILACS will be in 2025. In addition, we have been subject to a SEND local area inspection, a focused visit and potentially a joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) which looks at partnership services. The council remains under a statutory direction to co-operate with the Children's Services Commissioner, continue to accept support from Leeds City Council as formal improvement partner and to engage in Department for Education reviews on a 6-monthly basis.

Other Governance Issues

- A5 In addition to the information provided at 6.25, an extensive piece of work has been carried out to ensure all balances for Court of Protection clients are correct and a report on addressing this was presented to the Audit and Standards Committee in March 2023 and May 2024 under closed agenda items. The process for carrying out the reconciliation for court of protection work is being transferred from a manual process to an automated one. This will reduce the risk of manual intervention in relation to the court of protection function. The council continues to liaise with the OPG and update an action plan on a quarterly basis and the OPG are satisfied with the progress

made. The council has now started to open individual bank accounts for all deputyship and appointeeship clients, 150 accounts are now open and applications for debit cards for individuals continue to be made.