Annual Governance Statement (2024/25)

Oadby & Wigston Borough Council Annual Governance Statement (2024/25)

Background and Scope of Responsibility

Oadby & Wigston Council (the Council) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with legislation, regulation, government guidance and that proper standards of stewardship, conduct, probity, and professional competence are set and adhered to by all those representing, working for, and working with the Council. The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council must make proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and for facilitating the effective exercise of its functions including the management of risk.

The Council has previously approved and adopted a Code of Corporate Governance which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government'. This statement shows how the Council has complied with the code and also meets the requirements of The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, regulation 6(1)(b), which requires each English local authority to conduct a review, at least once a year, of the effectiveness of its systems of internal control and approve an annual governance statement (AGS).

The Purpose of the Governance Framework

The governance framework comprises the systems, processes, culture and values by which the Council is directed and controlled. It reflects activities through which the Council meets the needs of the community. It includes arrangements to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate services and value for money.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk at a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risks of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and therefore can only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an on-going process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives. Evaluation of the likelihood and potential impact of those risks being realised and how to manage them efficiently, effectively, and economically are key parts of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and its Corporate Plan.

This AGS confirms that the governance framework has been in place for the financial year ended 31 March 2025 and up to the date of the approval of the Annual Report and the Statement of Accounts.

The AGS is a summary of how the Council's management arrangements are set up to meet the principles of good governance and how we as a Council assure ourselves that these are effective and appropriate. The main goal of an AGS is to provide the reader with confidence

that the Council has an effective system of internal control to manage risks to reasonable levels.

The CIPFA Delivering Good Governance publication (2016) defines the various principles of good governance in the public sector and how they relate to each other and are defined as:

- Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law.
- Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
- Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.
- Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.
- Developing the Council's capacity, including its leadership and the individuals within it.
- Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.
- Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit, to deliver effective accountability.

The governance framework at Oadby and Wigston Borough Council comprises the systems and processes, culture and values which the Council has adopted in order to deliver on the above principles.

The Governance Framework

Current Governance Structure

Oadby & Wigston Borough Council has retained a committee system. The majority of UK local authorities now operate using a cabinet system where a group of members have been given the power to make the majority of decisions on behalf of their Council.

The benefits of retaining the committee system are that all members are able to sit on a range of decision-making committees and every member has a vote that counts. This is the cornerstone of the Council's governance – members are not marginalised in decision making. All decisions are debated and made during open committee in full public view. Closed sessions, for instance where commercially sensitive matters need to be discussed, are kept to an absolute minimum. Only the most urgent decisions are delegated to the Chair/Vice Chair of committees, and these must be reported back to the main committee as soon as possible. In addition to the statutory committees that deal with development control and licensing, the Council has three main committees:

- The Policy, Finance and Development Committee, which has overall responsibility for setting the long term aims of the Council and moving it forward in line with these objectives.
- The Service Delivery Committee, which has direct responsibility for the day-to-day operation of all services.
- The Audit Committee, which is responsible for Internal and External Audit and Risk Management.

Vision and Priorities

In January 2022 the Local Government Association (LGA) conducted a Peer Review. Two of the key recommendations were for a new vision and corporate plan to be created by

Members. The vision was signed off in September 2022 and our new Corporate Strategy was approved in July 2024.

The Council's Vision, which can be viewed on our website:

https://www.oadby-wigston.gov.uk/pages/our_vision has five Strategic Objectives:

1. **Our council:**
   - To be the local voice of residents and businesses.
   - To ensure that we provide high quality, value for money services that meet the needs of residents, businesses and visitors.
   - To ensure high connectivity with residents and businesses

2. **Our communities:**
   - To provide a clean and safe place for everyone.
   - To support any activities or actions that enhance the health and wellbeing of our Borough.
   - To provide good, affordable and efficient housing for everyone.

3. **Our economy:**
   - To support economic growth that is focused on our town centres.
   - To make our Borough an inviting place to visit.
   - To help to provide good employment opportunities.

4. **Our environment:**
   - To ensure that we are a carbon conscious Borough.
   - To be seen to be 'Green'.

5. **Our partners:**
   - To develop, maintain and enhance partnerships to help support delivery of our objectives.
   - To ensure we are engaged and listening to all sections of the community.

Corporate Plan & Corporate Strategy

The Council's current Corporate Plan was approved in July 2024, covering the period 2024-2027.

Service plan targets and key performance indicators are set for each department within the annual service delivery and development plans. Progress against targets is monitored monthly by the management team and reported regularly to relevant committees.

The Council ensures that its key priorities determine the allocation of resources to deliver its agreed activities. A robust corporate business planning programme is used to identify projects against agreed criteria, including the Council's policies, its priorities, the outcome of public consultations, demonstration of continuous improvements, and responding to legislative change.

Achievement of the Council's priorities has been monitored throughout the financial year 2024/25 by the Council's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and reports to the relevant committees. The monitoring of delivery against agreed priorities ensures the Council's capacity to deliver projects within agreed costs, time and resources.

Financial Management

The Council's financial position is reported against budget to every meeting of the Policy, Finance and Development Committee. Detailed budget information is provided to budget holders each month and dedicated project teams provide financial information for large projects or capital schemes.

The financial elements of the Council's corporate business planning process are included in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, which has a detailed one-year budget and high levels for the forthcoming years given the complete lack of clarity from central government regarding future funding for local authorities. The Council has a good track record of financial management and internal control, but resources are necessarily limited, and ongoing savings targets will be required to balance the Medium Term Financial Plan.

The Council continues to ensure that the accounts are compliant with the Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice. Performance against budget is reported at committee meetings and managed by SLT and through the corporate business planning process. The Council ensures that the levels of reserves it holds are generally sustainable over the medium term. The MTFS takes account of the current economic climate and changes to funding for local government.

The Council has a Treasury Management Strategy that is reviewed each year and monitored on a regular basis. This ensures the Council has sound processes and controls over its treasury function to minimise risk exposure.

Decision Making, Scrutiny and Governance

The Council, the Policy, Finance and Development Committee and the Service Delivery Committee take decisions on service and management matters in line with terms of reference set out in the Constitution. The committees meet four times each municipal year. Financial performance is monitored and scrutinised by the Policy, Finance and Development Committee on a quarterly basis the Service Delivery Committee reviews non-financial performance. Scrutiny and challenge is managed within these core committees and further challenge is provided by elected members through officers pre meeting with Committee Chairmen, Resident Forums and Member Workshops.

The Council has a separate Audit Committee which receives reports from the Internal Audit service and can require managers to attend to answer questions as required. Reports from the External Auditor are also received at these meetings.

The Audit Committee provides an independent and high-level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards. The Committee also meets quarterly and oversees internal audit and external audit arrangements, the annual accounts and ensures adequate internal controls are in place".

Elected members are responsible for ensuring that effective policy making, scrutiny and monitoring activities occur.

A clear committee structure assists such responsibilities to be effectively carried out. Member expertise and involvement is further enhanced by on-going training and development opportunities.

Internal Audit Arrangements

The Council's internal audit function is for 2024/25 was delivered by an external provider, 360 Assurance Ltd. The annual risk-based audit plan contributes to the review of the Council's key internal control systems, risk management processes and corporate governance

arrangements. 360 Assurance supports the design and effectiveness of the governance framework. Each internal audit review is given an assurance level. The definition of each of these assurance levels is provided in the table below.

Definition of Assurance Levels

- Full - No significant risk issues identified.
- Significant - Exposure to levels of risk that may only impair the effectiveness of the system or process under review.
- Moderate - Exposure to levels of risk that render some elements of the system's control environment undeliverable.
- Limited - Exposure to unacceptable level of risk that could have a serious impact upon the system or process under review.
- None - Exposure to unacceptable levels of risk that could have a serious impact upon the organisation as a whole.

Regular meetings are held between 360 Assurance and the Section 151 Officer, and the Client Manager attends the Council's Corporate Management Team meetings. This ensures the high standard of internal audit support is maintained. The annual audit plan is reviewed on a frequent basis to identify any amendments needed to reflect changing priorities, emerging risks or resourcing challenges. Regular reports are taken on a quarterly basis to the Audit Committee on the progress of internal audits and an annual report is also provided each year.

For 2024/25 out of a total of 17 audits, 14 returned significant assurance and 3 moderate assurance.

For 2025/26 our internal audit provider has been changed to SWAP (South West Audit Partnership).

External Audit Arrangements

The Audit Committee receives regular reports from the Council's External Auditors Grant Thornton LLP and Internal Audit (360 Assurance). The Section 151 Officer has direct access to this committee as well as to the External Auditors. Likewise, Audit Committee members have direct access to the External Auditor.

Financial Management Arrangements

Underpinning the Council's financial management arrangements is a regularity framework comprising Financial Regulations, Contract Procedure Rules, annual audits of key financial systems and audits of other systems undertaken on a risk-based basis. Other processes and procedures such as the Procurement Strategy and Risk Management Strategy are monitored on a regular basis.

Role of Statutory Officers

There are governance arrangements in place to ensure that members and officers work together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles. The Council's Constitution includes a scheme of delegation and terms of reference for each committee. Responsibilities are set out to make clear how the Council and its committees operate within the organisation. The scheme of delegation also defines the powers granted to the Chief Executive (the Head of Paid Service) and other chief officers within the areas of their service responsibility.

The Constitution reflects all relevant legislation impacting on decision making in local government and is published on the Council's website.

The Council has a statutory responsibility to have a Head of Paid Service, a Section 151 Officer and a Monitoring Officer. The Council's financial arrangements fully conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government. The Section 151 Officer is a key member of the Senior Leadership Team. The Section 151 Officer is responsible for the proper administration of the Council's financial arrangements and leads a fully resourced and suitably qualified finance function. The Section 151 Officer was actively involved in and able to bring influence to bear on all material business decisions to ensure immediate and long-term implications, opportunities and risks, were fully considered and in alignment with the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

The Monitoring Officer role is fulfilled by the Council's Legal and Democratic Services Manager, who acts as guardian of the Council's Constitution to ensure lawfulness, probity and fairness in Council decision making. The Monitoring Officer has processes for the review of legislative changes which feed into the annual review of the Constitution.

Consultation meetings and other forms of communication between the Monitoring Officer and senior managers as appropriate ensures that managers can contribute to revisions to the Constitution including the scheme of delegation.

The annual review includes the Constitution's terms of reference.

The Senior Leadership Team

Officer decision making at a strategic level is led by the Senior Leadership Team. For the majority of 2024/25 this comprised of the Chief Executive, a Strategic Director, a Chief Finance Officer/S151 Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Head of Built Environment and the Head of Customer Service and Transformation. The Team meets formally on a weekly basis and standing items of business include finance, policy, governance, human resources, performance management and the delivery of the Council's priorities.

Standards of Conduct

Officers of the Council are expected to maintain high standards of conduct. The Council has a staff code of conduct that is published on the intranet along with other policies and procedures.

There is an agreed protocol between members and officers to ensure that a constructive working relationship exists, and this Annual Governance Statement also promotes and demonstrates the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour. In addition, Policy, Finance and Development committee fulfils the functions of the Standards Committee and operates to ensure that councillors and any co-opted members of the Council behave in a way that exemplifies high standards of conduct and effective governance and has regard to the member code of conduct.

Regular records of advice and code issues are kept by the Monitoring Officer.

Declaring interests under the code of conduct is a standard item on the agenda at every committee meeting and Council and declarations are minuted by a member of the Democratic and Electoral Services Officer. A legal advisor attends all Council and committee meetings to advise on the application of the code and other issues where this is requested or otherwise considered appropriate. A planning code of conduct is in place and is adhered to by members who sit on the Development Control Committee.

Members and officers comply with the Council's gift and hospitality policy.

The Council's website explains how complaints can be made against elected members by either downloading a complaint form or making a complaint on-line. The web page also has links to the code of conduct and the Constitution.

A register of the Council's contracts is published on the Council's website. In addition, details of the Council's spend on individual items over £250 is published on a quarterly basis.

Compliance

The Council's policies and procedures are drawn up and regularly reviewed to ensure compliance with current legislation and regulations. Legal Services assist with updating and amending policies and advise on legal implications including legislative impacts on recommendations included in committee reports. Equalities implications are also considered as part of committee reports.

Whistle Blowing

Concerns regarding non-compliance with policies, procedures, laws and regulations can be raised through the Council's anti-fraud and confidential reporting policies. Concerns raised are always investigated and acted upon following clearly defined guidelines.

The Whistle Blowing Policy is published on the Council's intranet and internet to raise awareness and outline procedures in place to staff, contractors and the public. It features in the induction of new staff.

The Monitoring Officer, after consultation with the Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer, has statutory powers to report to Council in relation to any function, proposal, decision or omission that s/he considers would give rise to unlawfulness or any decision or omission that might give rise to maladministration. Such a report would have the effect of stopping the proposal or decision being implemented until the report has been considered.

Officer and Member Development

The Council's staff appraisal process assesses performance and delivery of Council objectives and also identifies any skills gaps that need addressing. Each officer has an agreed annual personal development plan. Progress against these plans is reviewed regularly through one-to-one discussions with line managers. The process ensures that the Council continually keeps under review the levels of skills required to carry out functions with due regard to law, policy and regulation.

As part of the Council's business planning process each service plan includes learning and development needs linked to specific actions.

This ensures that the skill sets required for delivering the key priorities and actions for the Council are identified and provided.

Training programmes and other development opportunities are circulated and shared more broadly using the Council's internal communication mechanisms. The Council also supports the training and development of members.

Consultation

Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability is a key element of the governance framework. The Council takes every opportunity to consult with relevant stakeholders before taking any decisions likely to impact on the level and quality

of services. In addition, the Council's business planning process includes an annual timetable of formal consultation events ensuring statutory, voluntary and business partners have the opportunity to comment on budget proposals under consideration.

The Council has given delegated authority on budget provision to three Resident Forums who can make recommendations to the Policy, Finance & Development Committee on how funds could be allocated to various projects within their geographic area. The Forums' membership is open to people who live in the three areas and this approach has been found to be a very good sources of two-way communication and consultation around the Council's policy initiatives.

Reviewing the Effectiveness of the Governance Framework

The Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control.

The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of senior managers within the Council who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment. The annual report from the Council's Internal Audit service is a key document in assessing the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements. Comments from External Auditors Grant Thornton LLP and other agencies and inspectorates such as the Local Government Association are also important.

The Senior Leadership Team, chaired by the Chief Executive, reviews the Council's governance framework and control environment and is responsible for the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement. Appropriate managers are responsible for producing their own service assurance statements and developing an improvement plan to rectify any identified governance weaknesses within their service areas. The Audit Committee reviews the Annual Governance Statement and evaluates the strength of the underlying assurance statements and evidence.

External Audit

The Council's external auditors are Grant Thornton. **Each year the external auditors review the Council's arrangements for**:

- Preparing accounts and compliance with statutory and other relevant requirements.
- Ensuring the proper conduct of financial affairs and monitoring their adequacy and effectiveness in practice.
- Managing performance to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources.

In April 2025 Grant Thornton issued their Audit Findings Report, covering the audit of the Council's 2023/24 financial statements. Four improvement recommendations were identified within the report and were identified as being agreed and addressed.

The report also identified a follow-up of 7 recommendations from previous audits. Out of these 7 recommendations the Council is confident to have completed 6 of them, and this was formally reported to the Council's Audit Committee 09 April 2025.

Internal Audit

The Council's Head of Internal Audit is required to provide an annual opinion, based upon and limited to the work performed, on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's risk management, control and governance processes (i.e. the Council's system of internal

control). This is achieved through a risk-based plan of work, agreed with management and approved by the Audit Committee, which should provide a reasonable level of assurance.

The Head of Internal Audit's role reflects best practice which is compliant with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).

For 2024/25, the Head of Internal Audit view was that, based on an objective assessment of the framework of governance, risk management and control, an opinion of Significant Assurance was provided.

The Head of Internal Audit Opinion and Annual Report will be presented report to the Audit Committee during July 2025.

The Head of Internal Audit stated that there was a generally sound framework of governance, risk management and control designed to meet the organisation's objectives and controls are generally being applied consistently.

Basis of the Auditors opinion formed

- An initial assessment of the design and operation of the underpinning risk management framework and supporting processes.
- An assessment of the range of individual opinions arising from risk-based audit assignment contained within internal audit risk-based plans that have been reported throughout the year. This assessment has taken account of the relative materiality of these areas and management's progress in respect of addressing control weaknesses.
- Any reliance that is being placed upon third party assurances.

Risk Management

During 2024/25 the Council's Strategic Risk Register was monitored by the Risk Management Group – a small, cross-organisational group of officers, managers and Heads of Service who monitor risk on behalf of the Senior Leadership Team. SLT review and sign off risk updates which are then presented to the Audit Committee on a quarterly basis.

The register identified major risks and commented on their likelihood and impact on the Council's objectives. Each risk is allocated a responsible senior officer for identifying an action plan and provides an update.

Risk management is embedded in processes such as project management, appraisal of new capital investment and service development plans as well as all formal Council reports.

The Role of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO)

The CFO (also referred to as the S151 Officer) conforms to the governance requirements and core responsibilities of two CIPFA Statements on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer; in Local Government (2016) and in the Local Government Pension Scheme (2014). The CFO is a key member of the Senior Leadership Team and is able to bring influence to bear on all material business decisions, ensuring that immediate and long-term implications, opportunities, and risks, are fully considered and in alignment with the MTFS and other corporate strategies.

The CFO is aware of, and committed to, the five key principles that underpin the role of the CFO and has completed an assurance statement that provides evidence against core activities which strengthen governance and financial management across the Council.

The Role of the Monitoring Officer (MO)

The Monitoring Officer has responsibility for ensuring that decisions taken comply with all necessary statutory requirements and are lawful. Where in the opinion of the Monitoring Officer any decision or proposal is likely to be unlawful and lead to maladministration, he/she shall advise the Council.

The MO is also bound to ensure that decisions taken are in accordance with the Council's budget and it's Policy Framework and provides advice on the scope of powers and authority to take decisions.

In discharging this role, the Monitoring Officer is supported by officers within the Legal and Democratic Services Teams.

The Monitoring Officer received public complaints during 2024/25.

Level 1 complaints   101

Early resolution   21

Level 2 complaints   19

Local Government Ombudsman

The Local Government Ombudsman were involved in four complaints during 2024/25. One was not investigated and the Council is awaiting the outcome from the other three investigations.

Housing Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman Service investigates complaints about social housing landlords when residents have already gone through the landlord's internal complaints process and haven't achieved a satisfactory resolution. In 2024-25 the Housing Ombudsman completed 3 investigations into the Council's Housing Services which resulted in 6 findings with 4 maladministration findings, a total number of 8 orders being made including payments of compensation and 3 recommendations such as further staff training, which the Council accepted.

Constitutional Matters

The key roles and responsibilities of Council committees, of elected members, the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer / Section 151 Officer are set out in the Council's Constitution scheme of delegation.

These three officers are responsible for ensuring that the Council acts within the law and in accordance with established policies and procedures. No report can be presented to Council or a committee for approval without first being reviewed by these officers or their delegated representative(s). These officers are also responsible for ensuring that legislation and policy relating to health and safety are implemented in practice.

The Council's Constitution sets out how it operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to make sure these are efficient, transparent and accountable to the people the Council serves. It's the key guide and 'rulebook' for how the Council; its staff and elected Members fulfil their roles and responsibilities. The Constitution is updated periodically, and the latest version is dated August 2024.

Code of Conduct

The standards of behaviour expected from members and officers are set out in the Member/Officer Codes of Conduct. The Council adopted the LGA Model Code of Conduct with local amendments, in December 2021. A register of members' interests is maintained, and the records of interest are declared at Council and committee meetings. All members are required to complete Related Party Declarations at the end of the financial year in support of the statutory financial statements.

Members' allowances are examined on an annual basis and a review of the allowance scheme was last undertaken in 2024 by an independent remuneration panel.

The Monitoring Officer received two member complaints in 2024/25 which were resolved informally without the need to conduct an investigation.

Effectiveness

Review of Effectiveness

The Council has responsibility for conducting at least annually, a review of its governance framework including the system of internal control.

The review is informed by the Internal Audit Annual Report, the work of the Audit Committee, the comments of external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates, and the work of the Senior Leadership Team who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control environment.

The review considers evidence identified to support where the Council meets the CIPFA/SOLACE guidance and sets out this in the Assurance Review and Evidence document. Governance areas are given an assessment scoring as follows:

- Good – Good governance exists and there are no improvements required.
- Fair – Satisfactory governance exists but improvements are required to meet good governance.
- Poor – Significant issues with governance exist which needs addressing.

Areas identified as fair or poor are reported within the annual governance statement and remedial actions are also outlined.

2024/25 Review of Effectiveness and Areas of improvement identified during 2024/25

No significant governance issues have been identified in the annual assurance review for 2024/25.

Full details of the review can be found in the Assurance Review Statement for 2024/25 which is published alongside this Annual Governance Statement and can be found later in this document.

Overall opinion and conclusion

Conclusion

The Council is satisfied that appropriate governance arrangements are in place however it remains committed to maintaining and where possible improving these arrangements, by proactively addressing those issues identified in undertaking the annual review.

The Council will continue to seek to enhance and strengthen governance arrangements within these areas for improvement and monitor progress made as part of our next annual review.

Statement of Leader and Chief Executive

We have been advised on the implications of the result of the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework carried out by members of the Senior Leadership Team and that the arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework.

Signed

Councillor Samia Haq
Leader of the Council
30/06/2025

Signed

Anne Court
Chief Executive
30/06/2025

Annual Governance Statement

Assurance Review

May 2025

Assurance and evidence in support of the Council's Governance Statement

Assessment Score:

GOOD – Good governance exists and there are no improvements required.

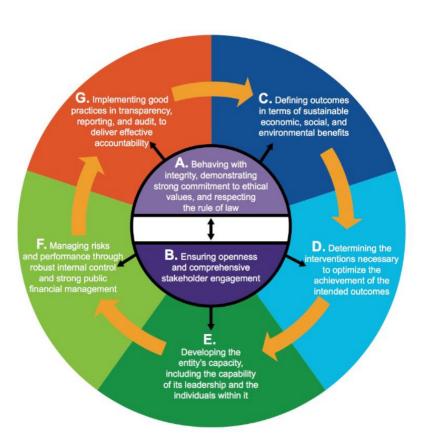**FAIR – Satisfactory governance but improvements are required to meet 'Good Governance'.**

POOR – Significant issues with governance exist which need addressing.

THE COUNCIL's GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

The Council's governance framework is consistent with the seven principles of the CIPFA / SOLACE Framework, which are:

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

B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

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

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

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

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

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

At the core of the framework are the principles of behaving with integrity and ensuring openness.

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

Supporting Principle 1: Behaving with Integrity

Requirement of local authorities to:	Assessment	Evidence	Significant Issues	Areas for Improvement	Lead
1. Ensuring members and officers behave with integrity and lead a culture where acting in the public interest is visibly and consistently demonstrated thereby protecting the reputation of the organisation.	Good.	Constitution (incl. statutory officers, scheme of delegation, financial and procurement procedure rules) Council, Committee Chairs, Committees. OFLOG Self-Assessment Service policies, Complaints procedure Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and S151 Officer HR policies and procedures Fraud policy in place. Induction training for new members and staff. Codes of conduct Ethics report taken to PFDC quarterly. SLT & CMT External & Internal Audit reports.	None.		
2. Ensuring members take the lead in establishing specific standard operating principles or values for the organisation and its staff and that they are communicated and understood. These should build on the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles)	Good.	Corporate Plan Council's values OFLOG Self-Assessment Corporate Strategy 2025/26 Budget Organisational Strategy	None.		
3. Leading by example and using these standard operating principles or values as a framework for decision making and other actions	Good.	Council leadership (Leader of the Council Deputy Leader, Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs, Mayor and Deputy Mayor) Declarations of interest noted. Up-to-date register of gifts and hospitality.	None.		

4. Demonstrating, communicating, and embedding the standard operating principles or values through appropriate policies and processes which are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are operating effectively	Good.	Anti-fraud and corruption policy in place. Register of interests and annual declaration of related parties. The whistle blowing policy and complaints policy are well established and regularly reviewed. The Members and Officers Codes of Conduct refers to a requirement to declare interests. Minutes show declarations of interest were sought, and appropriate declarations made.	None.		

Supporting Principle 2: Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values

Requirement of local authorities to:	Assessment	Evidence	Significant Issues	Areas for Improvement	Lead
1. Seeking to establish, monitor and maintain the organisation's ethical standards and performance	Good.	Values developed with staff and embedded into induction process for officers and members and appraisals for staff. Standards and Ethics report taken to PFDC quarterly.	None.		
2. Underpinning personal behaviour with ethical values and ensuring they permeate all aspects of the organisation's culture and operation.	Good.	Values embedded into induction process for officers and members and appraisals for staff. Values were developed with staff and are embedded across the Council	None.		
3. Developing and maintaining robust policies and procedures which place emphasis on agreed ethical values	Good.	Appraisal process built upon values of the Council and has been revisited during the year. Equality and Diversity Policy in place. EIAs are part of our standard approach and taken forward where appropriate or required.	None.		
4. Ensuring that external providers of services on behalf of the organisation are required to act with integrity and in compliance with high ethical standards expected by the organisation	Good.	Key partnerships have mechanisms in place to define role and scope of partners. Procurement exercises, where appropriate, include assessment criteria around social value which is incorporate into contracts.	None.		

Supporting Principle 3: Respecting the rule of law

Requirement of local authorities to:	Assessment	Evidence	Significant Issues	Areas for Improvement	Lead
1. Ensuring members and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of the law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations	Good.	Constitution is adhered to and reviewed regularly. Statutory provisions are adhered to. Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and S151/CFO in place.	None.		
2. Creating the conditions to ensure that the statutory officers, other key post holders and members are able to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements.	Good.	Job descriptions and roles of statutory officers are well defined and understood by the organisation. Structure of SLT ensures statutory officers are included in decision making. The S151 / CFO role complies with CIPFA's Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (CIPFA, 2016). Statutory Officers meet separately to the Senior Leadership Team when necessary and the Directors and CEX regularly meet separately.	None.		
3. Striving to optimise the use of the full powers available for the benefit of citizens, communities, and other stakeholders	Good.	Arrangements in place for legal advice and recording of advice. All reports requiring a decision are considered by Finance and Legal before being considered by the relevant decision-making committee/Council.	None.		
4. Dealing with breaches of legal and regulatory provisions effectively	Good.	Proper arrangements in place for legal advice and recording of advice, Monitoring Officer referenced to give advice and ensure Council's operates within the law at all times. Monitoring Officer authorised to investigate all breaches and refer to appropriate regulatory bodies.	None.		
5. Ensuring corruption and misuse of power are dealt with effectively	Good.	Whistleblowing policy, anti-fraud and corruption policy in place. Segregation of duties on key financial processes.	None.		

Core Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Supporting Principle 1: Openness

Requirement of local authorities to:	Assessment	Evidence	Significant Issues	Areas for Improvement	Lead
1. Ensuring an open culture through demonstrating, documenting and communicating the organisation's commitment to openness	Good.	Corporate Plan and emerging Corporate Strategy. Budget considerations are consulted upon, and results are published. FOI requests actively responded to, website, online publishing of expenditure.	None.		
2. Making decisions that are open about actions, plans, resource use, forecasts, outputs and outcomes. The presumption is for openness. If that is not the case, a justification for the reasoning for keeping a decision confidential should be provided	Good.	Record of decision making and supporting materials. Standard report format used. The Council's governance framework aims to ensure it sets and meets its objectives and responsibilities in a lawful, timely, open, inclusive, and honest manner; and that its use of public money and resources are safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.	None.		
3. Providing clear reasoning and evidence for decisions in both public records and explanations to stakeholders and being explicit about the criteria, rationale and considerations used. In due course, ensuring that the impact and consequences of those decisions are clear	Good.	Decisions well documented with supporting information and advice included. Forward Plan detailing report publication on a timely basis. Calendar of dates for submitting, publishing, and distributing timely reports is adhered to Council and Committee meetings are normally open to the public unless information is of a commercially sensitive nature. The conduct of business is defined by formal procedures and rules that are set out in the Constitution.	None.		
4. Using formal and informal consultation and engagement to determine the most appropriate and effective interventions / courses of action.	Good	Customer and staff satisfaction surveys carried out regularly. Resident Forums in place for key towns in the borough (Oadby, Wigston and South Wigston). We follow statutory requirements for consultation and very often go above that in terms of community engagement. Ad-hoc approach to informal consultation in place and utilised. Communications Strategy adopted April 2022 and Customer Experience Strategy adopted in 2023. The Tenant and Leaseholder Forum plays a key role ensuring the Council meets its regulatory standards.	None.		

		Comprehensive consultations undertaken in 2023/24 including 2024/25 budget consultation, hackney carriage vehicle consultation, polling districts, places and stations, statement of community involvement, draft climate change strategy, draft damp, mould and condensation policy and housing tenants' perception survey.			

Supporting Principle 2: Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders

Requirement of local authorities to:	Assessment	Evidence	Significant Issues	Areas for Improvement	Lead
1. Effectively engaging with institutional stakeholders to ensure that the purpose, objectives and intended outcomes for each stakeholder relationship are clear so that outcomes are achieved successfully and sustainably	Good.	Formal and informal partnerships in place. Regular diarised meetings with appropriate senior officers and partners (including SLM, Helping Hands). Strong example is relationship with University of Leicester and support from the Council to the Civic Agreement.	None.		
2. Developing formal and informal partnerships to allow for resources to be used more efficiently and outcomes achieved more effectively	Good.	Partnership working across the authority is strong for example the recently formed Building Control partnership. Approach to consideration of shared services embedded as part of alternative service delivery model reviews. Service Level Agreements. Partnership agreements exist. The organisation has a range of partnerships and collaborative relationships. They have appropriate legal agreements and governance commensurate with the nature of the partnership, depending on factors such as legal status, membership, risk, subject matter.	None.	Develop Partnership Toolkit as per Corporate Strategy.	To be allocated
3. Ensuring that partnerships are based on trust, a shared commitment to change, a culture that promotes and accepts challenge among partners and that the added value of partnership working is explicit	Good.	As above.	None.		

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

Supporting Principle 1: Defining outcomes

Requirement of local authorities to:	Assessment	Evidence	Significant Issues	Areas for Improvement	Lead
1. Having a clear vision which is an agreed formal statement of the organisation's purpose and intended outcomes containing appropriate performance indicators, which provides the basis for the organisation's overall strategy, planning and other decisions.	Fair.	The Corporate Plan and emerging Strategy defines the vision for the Council, including values and priorities. Service Plans are developed based on the Corporate Plan. The quarterly monitoring report and End of Year report details performance against the performance indicators. Council Vision is widely promoted and embedded within the authority. The emerging Corporate Strategy is firmly aligned with the vision.	None.	Approval of New Corporate Strategy	To be allocated. For 2024/25. To be reallocated from 25/26.
2. Specifying the intended impact on, or changes for, stakeholders including citizens and service users. It could be immediately or over the course of a year or longer	Good.	Intended impacts set out in Corporate Plan / Strategy and Team Business Plans.	None.		
3. Delivering defined outcomes on a sustainable basis within the resources that will be available	Good.	Team Business Plans developed for each service area. Regular performance and finance reports monitored by SLT; Project performance reports monitored by SLT, Service Delivery and Performance, Finance and Development Committees.	None.	Embed the revised PPM approach across the Council.	Strategic Director
4. Identifying and managing risks to the achievement of outcomes	Good.	Quarterly review of risk with SLT. Risk Management Group involves a cross-organisational set of officers from all management levels who monitor risk. Audit Committee review of risk on a quarterly basis.	None.	Ensure that all the agreed Internal Audit actions are implemented in a timely manner (Added focus to given to those Audits with less than Significant Assurance),	Senior Leadership Team (However each SLT Member is responsible for their own service area).
5. Managing service users' expectations effectively with regard to determining	Good.	Performance Indicators within Team Business Plans and Corporate Plan/Strategy include	None.		

priorities and making the best use of the resources available		agreed set of quality standard measures.			

Supporting Principle 2: Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

Requirement of local authorities to:	Assessment	Evidence	Significant Issues	Areas for Improvement	Lead
1. Considering and balancing the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies, plans and decisions when taking decisions about service provision	Fair.	We actively consider the social and economic impact of policies in decisions. An example of this is social value considerations in procurement exercises. Risk management plays an active part in considering and balancing impacts.	None.	A review of committee report format will be undertaken to ensure report authors convey the economic, social and environmental impact of policies, plans and decisions.	Head of Law and Democracy for 2024/25. To be reallocated for 2025/26.
2. Taking a longer-term view with regard to decision making, taking account of risk and acting transparently where there are potential conflicts between the organisation's intended outcomes and short-term factors such as the political cycle or financial constraints	Good.	Record of decision making and supporting materials made available publicly on website. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy adopted includes an affordability approach to assessing the financial implications of the corporate strategy. The MTFP includes a Sustainability Plan for closing budget gaps. The draft Corporate Strategy has been developed in order to be deliverable within the Council's budgetary constraints. The MTFP is updated and presented to members twice annually and to scenario model potential outcomes associated with key factors and impact of decisions.	None.		
3. Determining the wider public interest associated with	Good.	We follow statutory requirements for consultation and as part	None.		

balancing conflicting interests between achieving the various economic, social and environmental benefits, through consultation where possible, in order to ensure appropriate trade-offs.		of very often go above that in terms of community engagement. Ad-hoc approach to informal consultation in place and utilised. Elected members act in public interest. Record of decisions made available to public via website. Consultations on key projects with key groups. Members abide by the code of conduct and all committee reports are prepared to reflect all the relevant options, risks and benefits – so members have all the relevant information in front of them when they make a decision. The Council is transparent in decision making. We publish all our agendas and minutes.			
4. Ensuring fair access to services	Good.	Nominated Equalities lead. All new policies presented for approval require Equalities Impact Assessment to be completed and regularly reviewed as part of ensuring fair access. Equality and Diversity Policy in place. Process in place for equalities impact assessments and action included in Equalities and Diversity Action Plan to assess current processes. The Customer Experience Strategy was adopted in 2023 and progress is regularly monitored to ensure fair access to services is available to all our residents. Our local insight document is available on the intranet and used so that all our staff better understand our customer groups.	None.		

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

Supporting Principle 1: Determining interventions

Requirement of local authorities to:	Assessment	Evidence	Significant Issues	Areas for Improvement	Lead
1. Ensuring decision makers receive objective and rigorous analysis of a variety of options indicating how intended outcomes would be achieved and including the risks associated with those options. Therefore ensuring best value is achieved however services are provided	Good.	All reports details options appraisals and risks associated with decisions. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy adopted includes an affordability approach to assessing the financial implications of the corporate strategy. The MTFP includes a Sustainability Plan for closing budget gaps. This is updated and presented to members twice annually and to scenario model potential outcomes associated with key factors and impact of decisions. The draft Corporate Strategy has been developed in order to be deliverable within the Council's budgetary constraints.	None.		
2. Considering feedback from citizens and service users when making decisions about service improvements or where services are no longer required in order to prioritise competing demands within limited resources available including people, skills, land and assets and bearing in mind future impacts	Good.	Budget consultation undertaken for 2024/25 received 359 replies. Whilst this was a challenging budget, due to the amount of savings that were necessary a change to the draft budget was to reintroduce expenditure on community health and well-being. Other comprehensive consultations undertaken in 2023/24 include the hackney carriage vehicle consultation, polling districts, places and stations, statement of community involvement, draft climate change strategy, draft damp, mould and condensation policy and housing tenants' perception survey. For other areas, we follow statutory requirements for consultation and very often go above that in terms of community engagement. Ad-hoc approach to informal consultation in place and utilised.	None.		

Supporting Principle 2: Planning interventions

Requirement of local authorities to:	Assessment	Evidence	Significant Issues	Areas for Improvement	Lead
1. Establishing and implementing robust planning and control cycles that cover strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets.	Good.	Calendar dates for all Council meetings agreed in advance, reports published in a timely manner ensuring a robust planning cycle. Quarterly performance and finance reports monitored by SLT and Service Delivery and Policy, Finance and Development Committees.	None.	Ensure that all Internal Audit Reviews are considered by SLT in detail prior to final sign-off by Service Managers	CFO
2. Engaging with internal and external stakeholders in determining how services and other courses of action should be planned and delivered.	Good.	Resident Forums in existence for each major town in the borough. We regularly consult where changes to policies are made, over and above statutory requirements. Tenant engagement approach for Housing now established and will develop further in 2024/25.	None.		
3. Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively including shared risks	Good	Strong partnerships exist. Partnership agreements exist where necessary for financial/legal/governance/risk reasons and formal agreements are put in place. (e.g. Shared Building Control).	None		
4. Ensuring arrangements are flexible and agile so that the mechanisms for delivering outputs can be adapted to changing circumstances	Good.	Delegated responsibility in some areas. Constitution is flexible. Delegated decision making can be amended to facilitate urgent decision making.	None.		
5. Establishing appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs) as part of the planning process in order to identify how the performance of services and projects is to be measured	Good.	KPIs established and approved for each service and included in Service Plans. Quarterly Performance Reports are considered by Service Delivery Committee.	None.		
6. Ensuring capacity exists to generate the information required to review service quality regularly	Good.	Performance is included to give context for decisions to be made where necessary. Resource dedicated to Transformation which works across the organisation to make customer, process and financial improvements.	None.		

			Programme of service reviews continues in 2024/25 as part of the council's Sustainability Programme.			
7.	Preparing budgets in accordance with organisational objectives, strategies and the medium-term financial plan	Good	Strategic and Financial Planning timetable was reviewed and aligned for 2024/25 planning, enabling a more integrated approach. Numerous Member workshops covering Financial Sustainability were undertaken during the year. Star Chambers where the Council Leader, Deputy Leader, Chairmen of SDC and PFDC and a Councillor from the Opposition were invited to budget meetings in order to scrutinise and understand budget proposals with the respective Heads of Service prior to formal budget setting. 2024/25 Budget was approved with the Council committed to not using General Reserves to balance the budget. Emerging Corporate Strategy is prepared with close alignment to financial position.	None.	Ensure 2025/26 budget is prepared in accordance with Corporate Strategy activities.	CFO
8.	Informing medium and long term resource planning by drawing up realistic estimates of revenue and capital expenditure aimed at developing a sustainable funding strategy	Good.	Strategic and Financial Planning timetable was reviewed and aligned for 2024/25 planning, enabling a more integrated approach. Numerous Member workshops covering Financial Sustainability were undertaken during the year. Star Chambers where the Council Leader, Deputy Leader, Chairmen of SDC and PFDC and a Councillor from the Opposition were invited to budget meetings in order to scrutinise and understand budget proposals with the respective Heads of Service prior to formal budget setting. A realistic, practical and achievable Sustainability Plan was approved as part of the 2024/25 Budget with Council committed to not using General Reserves to balance the budget.	None.		

Supporting Principle 3: Optimising achievement of intended outcomes

Requirement of local authorities to:	Assessment	Evidence	Significant Issues	Areas for Improvement	Lead
1. Ensuring the medium-term financial strategy integrates and balances service priorities, affordability and other resource constraints	Fair	A realistic, practical and achievable Sustainability Plan was approved as part of the 2024/25 Budget with Council committed to not using General Reserves to balance the budget. The MTFP updated and presented to members twice annually and to scenario model potential outcomes associated with key factors and impact of decisions. Further work through the Sustainability Programme as outlined above will enhance this.	None.	Ensure savings targets identified in the Sustainability Plan are met and consistently applied.	CFO
2. Ensuring the budgeting process is all inclusive, taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term	Good.	There is a five-year Capital budget planning window. The detailed revenue budget currently planned one year at a time. The MTFP focuses on five-year medium term.	None.		
3. Ensuring the medium-term financial strategy sets the context for ongoing decisions on significant delivery issues or responses to changes in the external environment that may arise during the budgetary period in order for outcomes to be achieved while optimising resource usage	Good	The Medium-Term Financial Strategy adopted includes an affordability approach to assessing the financial implications of the corporate strategy. The MTFP includes a Sustainability Plan for closing budget gaps. The draft Corporate Strategy has been developed in order to be deliverable within the Council's budgetary constraints. The MTFP is updated and presented to members twice	None.		

		annually and to scenario model potential outcomes associated with key factors and impact of decisions.			
4. Ensuring the achievement of 'social value' through service planning and commissioning.	Good	Social value considered through the Council's Procurement Policy.	None		

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

Supporting Principle 1: Developing the entity's capacity

Requirement of local authorities to:	Assessment	Evidence	Significant Issues	Areas for Improvement	Lead
1. Reviewing operations, performance use of assets on a regular basis to ensure their continuing effectiveness	Fair.	Reviews of structures, ways of working and performance carried out as necessary. Acquisitions and Disposals Policies. Work is underway with the asset management policy and capital expenditure plan but this is not yet complete. A comprehensive asset review has been undertaken and associated activities including asset disposals are underway. The approach to purchasing a specific asset management database has been refined so that the asset management is contained within the Council's Housing Asset Management System (therefore maximising the use of that Council IT Asset).	None.	Complete the revision of the Asset Management Policy and Capital Expenditure Plan Ensure the 'Corporate Assets' element of the Asset Management Database is timetabled and completed.	Head of Law and Democracy in 2024/25 and Head of Neighbourhood Services from 2025/26
2. Improving resource use through appropriate application of techniques such as benchmarking and other options in order to determine how the authority's resources are allocated so that	Good	Benchmarking is conducted across the Council, and Customer Services participate in a local benchmarking group with other Leicestershire Councils. There are several other specific groups, for example, the DWP	None.		

outcomes are achieved effectively and efficiently		(Department for Work and Pensions) Benefits Performance Management Group. As a result of benchmarking with regard to planning processes, the Council have streamlined their process so that now they lead in terms of decision times. The management of extensions has also been improved. Finance benchmarking subscription in place via LG Inform.			
3. Recognising the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved	Good.	Strong partnership working across the Council.	None.		
4. Developing and maintaining an effective workforce plan to enhance the strategic allocation of resources	Good	Existing Strategic Risk Register. People Strategy approved and rolled out during Summer 2023. Sustainability Plan identified areas for possible redundancy as part of the required savings targets for the 2024/25 Budget.	None.		

Supporting Principle 2: Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals

Requirement of local authorities to:	Assessment	Evidence	Significant Issues	Areas for Improvement	Lead
1. Developing protocols to ensure that elected and appointed leaders negotiate with each other regarding their respective roles early in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained	Good.	Regular meetings between Leader and Chief Executive. Regular meetings also take place between the Chief Executive and Leader of the Opposition. Committee Chairs supported by designated SLT leads. Robust member induction programme, with specific and significant training planned. Code of Conduct for all members.	None.		
2. Publishing a statement that specifies the types of decisions that are delegated and those reserved for the collective	Good.	Regular review of delegation and financial regulations. Constitution.	None.		

	decision making of the governing body				
3.	Ensuring the leader and the chief executive have clearly defined and distinctive leadership roles within a structure whereby the chief executive leads the authority in implementing strategy and managing the delivery of services and other outputs set by members and each provides a check and a balance for each other's authority	Good.	Clear roles and responsibilities with CEX's objectives set and monitored by Members.	None.	
4.	Developing the capabilities of members and senior management to achieve effective shared leadership and to enable the organisation to respond successfully to changing legal and policy demands as well as economic, political and environmental changes and risks by: • Ensuring members and staff have access to appropriate induction tailored to their role and that ongoing training and development matching individual and organisational requirements is available and encouraged • Ensuring members and officers have the appropriate skills, knowledge, resources and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities and ensuring that they are able to update their knowledge on a continuing basis. • Ensuring personal, organisational and system-wide development through shared learning, including lessons learnt from governance weaknesses both internal and external	Good.	Comprehensive timetable of member inductions. Members trained as and when required for specific issues. Formal induction process for new administration and new members. Robust member induction programme, with specific and significant training was undertaken. Code of Conduct for all members and officers. Detailed and specific induction processes take place for staff and appraisals which detail any specific learning are undertaken annually. Post entry training and CPD is also encouraged, and professional fees are reimbursed.	None.	
5.	Ensuring that there are structures in place to encourage public participation	Good.	Resident Forums, Customer feedback, regular formal consultation exercises.	None.	
6.	Taking steps to consider the leadership's own effectiveness and ensuring	Good.	LGA Financial Health Check 2021 and LGA Corporate Peer Review in 2022.	None.	

	Requirement	Assessment	Evidence	Significant Issues	Areas for Improvement	Lead
	leaders are open to constructive feedback from peer review and inspections		OFLOG Best Value Self-Assessment undertaken March/April 2024			
7.	Holding staff to account through regular performance reviews which take account of training or development needs	Good.	Staff development plans linked to appraisals. Staff performance appraisal approach was reviewed, refreshed and relaunched in 2023.	None.		
8.	Ensuring arrangements are in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce and support individuals in maintaining their own physical and mental wellbeing.	Good.	There are numerous health and well-being initiatives such as discount on leisure facilities for staff, free eye-tests, cycle to work scheme, Brocks Hill walks and activities such as pilates. Employee advice line, There are counselling sessions available for those in need. Sickness management ongoing.	None.		

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

Supporting Principle 1: Managing risk

	Requirement of local authorities to:	Assessment	Evidence	Significant Issues	Areas for Improvement	Lead
1.	Recognising that risk management is an integral part of all activities and must be considered in all aspects of decision making	Good.	Risk Management system in place with regular monitoring at Manager/HoS level and SLT and Audit Committee. New cross-service and role Risk Management Group established to monitor risk. Risk Management Policy adopted by Audit Committee January 23.	None.		
2.	Implementing robust and integrated risk management arrangements and ensuring that they are working effectively	Good.	Risk Management Policy formally approved and adopted. Health and Safety Action Plan in place.	None.		
3.	Ensuring that responsibilities for managing individual risks are clearly allocated	Good.	Risk Management system in place with regular monitoring. Each Strategic Risk has a member of SLT as the strategic risk owner.	None.		

Supporting Principle 2: Managing Performance

Requirement of local authorities to:	Assessment	Evidence	Significant Issues	Areas for Improvement	Lead
1. Monitoring service delivery effectively including planning, specification, execution and independent post implementation review	Good.	Monitoring of service delivery currently completed through service plans. Agreed performance targets reported monthly. SLAs for all service areas, reviewed annually.	None.		
2. Making decisions based on relevant, clear objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks inherent in the organisation's financial, social and environmental position and outlook	Good.	Standardised project appraisal and affordability approach developed as part of the MTFS. This new approach was utilised for the Council funding allocation decision for the office relocation.	None.		
3. Encouraging effective and constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives to support balanced and effective decision making	Good.	Committee system enables all members to contribute towards ensuring policies are effective and objectives are delivered. Support offered to opposition members e.g. through regular briefings with the CEX and relevant members of SLT, through the Buddying System and as part of budget setting.	None.		
4. Providing members and senior management with regular reports on service delivery plans and on progress towards outcome achievement	Good.	Regular quarterly reports to SLT and Service Delivery Committee.	None.		

5.	Ensuring there is consistency between specification stages (such as budgets) and post implementation reporting (eg financial statements)	Good.	Standing orders in place. Approval reports are separate from financial updates.	None.		

Supporting Principle 3: Robust internal control

Requirement of local authorities to:	Asses sment	Evidence	Signifi cant Issues	Areas for Improvement	Lead
1. Aligning the risk management strategy and policies on internal control with achieving the objectives	Good.	Risk management policy audit plan and regular audit reports.	None.		
2. Evaluating and monitoring the authority's risk management and internal control on a regular basis	Good.	Risk management policy with risks reviewed regularly by Risk Management Group, SLT and Audit Committee.	None.		
3. Ensuring effective counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are in place	Fair	Compliance with the Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption (CIPFA, 2014). Anti-fraud policy updated April 2023 and Anti-corruption policy in place. Anti-fraud training has been rolled out across the Council. Annual Report on anti-fraud progress to be provided to Audit Committee	None.	Ant-Fraud Report to be submitted to Audit Committee	Chief Finance Officer/S15 1 Officer
4. Ensuring additional assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control is provided by the internal auditor	Good.	Annual governance statement, internal audit arrangements adequate with internal audit actively involved in service improvement.	None.		
5. Ensuring an audit committee or equivalent group or function which is independent of the executive and accountable to the governing body:	Good.	Audit committee complies with best practice. See Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police (CIPFA, 2018). Terms of Reference in place for Committee.	None.		

| provides a further source of effective assurance regarding arrangements for managing risk and maintaining an effective control environment that its recommendations are listened to and acted upon. | Training for committee members provided June 2022, included session to enable committee members to approve the financial statements. Financial Statement repeated in March 2025.

Audit Committee Self-Assessment was undertaken in January 2024 | | | |

Supporting Principle 4: Managing Data

Requirement of local authorities to:	Assessment	Evidence	Significant Issues	Areas for Improvement	Lead
1. Ensuring effective arrangements are in place for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data, including processes to safeguard personal data.	Good.	Policies in place for data management and data protection. Designated data protection officer.	None.	None.	
2. Ensuring effective arrangements are in place and operating effectively when sharing data with other bodies.	Good.	Data sharing agreements in place and data processing agreements where necessary.	None.	None.	
3. Reviewing and auditing regularly the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring.	Good.	Regular internal audits carried out.	None.	None.	

Supporting Principle 5: Strong public financial management

Requirement of local authorities to:	Assessment	Evidence	Significant Issues	Areas for Improvement	Lead
1. Ensuring financial management supports both long-term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance.	Fair.	The Medium-Term Financial Strategy includes new affordability approach to assessing the financial implications of the corporate strategy and a Sustainability Plan for closing budget gaps.	None.	Progress the outstanding actions to meet the CIPFA Financial Management Code:	CFO

		During 2023/24 the S151 Officer led a number of financial workshops with elected members to emphasise the Council's financial position. Working closely with Councillors and the SLT, the budget setting process for 2024/25 provided challenging yet tangible and achievable savings targets that were necessary to put the Council on a more sustainable footing. The MTFP is updated and presented to members twice annually and to scenario model potential outcomes associated with key factors and impact of decisions. That said, the work undertaken to adopt the CIPFA Financial Management Code in 2022 identified areas where the Council did not achieve the Code requirements and the majority of these have now been taken forward with any outstanding actions outstanding to be implemented in 2024/25		- Progress the vision for finance at OWBC - Undertake training needs analysis of finance team and develop training and development plan - Update Financial Procedure Rules - Implement the Internal Audit recs/	
2.	Ensuring well-developed financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control, including management of financial risks and controls	Good	There are budget monitoring reports and regular reviews. The relationship between budget managers and business partners has improved and finance play a key role in key projects (such as the introduction of alternate weekly bin collections). This will now be monitored, and continuous improvements undertaken in a 'business as usual" approach.		

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

Supporting Principle 1: Implementing good practice in transparency

Requirement of local authorities to:	Assessment	Evidence	Significant Issues	Areas for Improvement	Lead
1. Writing and communicating reports for the public and other stakeholders in an understandable style appropriate to the intended audience and ensuring that they are easy to access and interrogate	Good.	Website is user friendly, all formal reports written in 'plain English'.	None.		
2. Striking a balance between providing the right amount of information to satisfy transparency demands and enhance public scrutiny while not being too onerous to provide and for users to understand	Good.	Website user friendly, all formal reports written in 'plain English'. Website includes translation tool.	None.		

Supporting Principle 2: Implementing good practices in reporting

Requirement of local authorities to:	Assessment	Evidence	Significant Issues	Areas for Improvement	Lead
1. Reporting at least annually on performance, value for money and the stewardship of its resources	Good.	Service and Financial performance are reported quarterly to committees, Statement of Accounts, Annual Governance Statement.	None.		
2. Ensuring members and senior management own the results	Good.	Members and SLT receive and approve reports.	None.		

3.	Ensuring robust arrangements for assessing the extent to which the principles contained in the Framework have been applied and publishing the results on this assessment including an action plan for improvement and evidence to demonstrate good governance (annual governance statement)	Good.	Annual Governance Statement.	None.		
4.	Ensuring that the Framework is applied to jointly managed or shared service organisations as appropriate	Good.	Annual Governance Statement.	None.		
5.	Ensuring the performance information that accompanies the financial statements is prepared on a consistent and timely basis and the statements allow for comparison with other similar organisations	Good.	Format follows best practice.	None.		

Supporting Principle 3: Assurance and effective accountability

Requirement of local authorities to:	Assessment	Evidence	Significant Issues	Areas for Improvement	Lead
1. Ensuring that recommendations for corrective action made by external audit are acted upon	Good.	Recommendations from external audit acted upon. Regular communication between S151 Officer and External Auditor. Progress made against external	None.		

No.						
			audit recs are reported to Audit Committee			
2.	Ensuring an effective internal audit service with direct access to members is in place which provides assurance with regard to governance arrangements and recommendations are acted upon	Good.	Internal Audit report directly to Audit Committee. Recommendations from internal audit acted upon. Compliance of Internal Audit arrangements with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. Regular communication between S151 Officer and Internal Auditor.	None.		
3.	Welcoming peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and implementing recommendations	Good.	Corporate Peer Challenge undertaken January 2022. All recommendations were implemented. OFLOG Best Value approach has been approved by Council	None.		