

<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Item no.</b>
Corporate Director Resources (S151 Officer)	Audit Committee	14 June 2022	

**DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2021/22**

**1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1** To approve the draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2021/22 for inclusion in the Annual Statement of Accounts following a review of the council's governance arrangements.

**2. Outcomes**

- 2.1** Evidence that the council has effective governance arrangements in place.

**3. Recommendations**

- 3.1** The Committee is asked to review and formally approve the draft AGS.
- 3.2** The Committee is asked to give delegated authority to the Section 151 to make minor amendments and any changes requested by External Audit.

**4. Background**

- 4.1** The AGS is a valuable means of communication. It enables an authority to explain to the community, service users, taxpayers and other stakeholders its governance arrangements and how the controls it has in place manage risks of failure in delivering its outcomes.
- 4.2** In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 the council is required to prepare an AGS, which is published alongside the Statement of Accounts.
- 4.3** The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) have jointly issued a framework and guidance in relation to the AGS; 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government 2016'. The guidance urges local authorities to prepare a governance statement in order to report publicly on the extent to which they comply with their own code of governance on

an annual basis, including how they have monitored the effectiveness of their governance arrangements in the year, and on any planned changes in the coming period. The process of preparing the governance statement should itself add value to the corporate governance and internal control framework of an organisation. It also recommends that when complying with the guidance, authorities should use it in a way that best reflects their structure, type, functions and size.

**4.4** The framework recognises that effective governance is achieved through seven core principles;

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

**4.5** In February 2021 CIPFA published a special Bulletin on the AGS (No.6) to provide additional guidance on how to adapt the content of the AGS to reflect the impact of the on-going pandemic. Similar to the AGS for 2020/21 new sections have been included to reflect the changes to the governance arrangements across the council. The bulletin also refers to the new Financial Management Code and again as with 2020/21, a section has been added to reflect the new Code and to document the review that has been undertaken of the council's compliance with the Code.

## **5. Key Issues and proposals**

**5.1** The draft AGS for 2021/22 is attached at Appendix 1. The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive will be asked to sign the statement certifying that they are aware of the governance issues within the Authority and of the measures that are needed to mitigate them.

**5.2** No significant governance issues have been raised that require documenting separately in the Annual Governance Statement for 2021/22. However, a number of minor issues have been identified which have been documented in an action plan (Appendix 2). The implementation of these issues will be monitored by CMT and the Audit Committee.

<b>Financial and legal implications</b>	
Finance	None arising directly from the report.
Legal	Effective audit and risk management assist in good governance and the probity of council actions.

### **Other risks / implications: checklist**

If there are significant implications arising from this report on any issues marked with a ✓ below, the report author will have consulted with the appropriate specialist officers on those implications and addressed them in the body of the report. There are no significant implications arising directly from this report, for those issues marked with an x.

<b>risks/implications</b>	<b>✓ / x</b>
community safety	x
equality and diversity	x
sustainability	x
health and safety	x

<b>risks/implications</b>	<b>✓ / x</b>
asset management	x
climate change	x
ICT	x
data protection	x

### **Processing Personal Data**

In addition to considering data protection along with the other risks/ implications, the report author will need to decide if a 'privacy impact assessment (PIA)' is also required. If the decision(s) recommended in this report will result in the collection and processing of personal data for the first time (i.e. purchase of a new system, a new working arrangement with a third party) a PIA will need to have been completed and signed off by Data Protection Officer before the decision is taken in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018

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<b>List of background papers:</b>		
name of document	date	where available for inspection
None		

## **List of appendices**

Appendix 1 – Draft Annual Governance Statement 2021/22

Appendix 2 – Annual Governance Statement Action Plan 2021/22

## **DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2021/22**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION TO CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

- 1.0 Good governance is about how the council ensures that it is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. It comprises the systems and processes, culture and values by which local government bodies are directed and controlled and through which they account to, engage with and, where appropriate, lead their communities. Good governance also enables the council to pursue its corporate vision effectively, as well as underpinning that vision, with mechanisms for control and management of risks.

### **2.0 SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY**

- 2.1 Wyre Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and appropriate standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and that funding is used economically, efficiently and effectively. Wyre 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.
- 2.2 In discharging this overall responsibility, Wyre Council is responsible for putting in place suitable arrangements for the governance of its affairs, which facilitate the effective exercise of its functions and includes arrangements for the management of risk.
- 2.3 Wyre Council has adopted a code of corporate governance, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA / SOLACE 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' framework 2016.

### **3.0 THE PURPOSE OF THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK**

- 3.1 The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the authority is directed and controlled, together with the activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.
- 3.2 The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to meet the targets in our policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of Wyre Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the

impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

- 3.3 The governance framework has been in place at Wyre Council for the year ending 31 March 2022.

#### **4.0 WYRE COUNCIL'S LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

4.1 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) have published a framework and guidance for delivering good governance in local government. The guidance helps local authorities to interpret the overarching principles contained in the framework prior to developing and maintaining their own 'local' corporate governance arrangements. The framework recognises that effective governance is achieved through seven core principles and 21 sub-principles.

4.2 It should be noted that the CIPFA / SOLACE guidance is not prescriptive and authorities are encouraged to use it in a way that best reflects their structure, type, functions and size.

#### **5.0 PROCESS FOR THE COMPLETION, REVIEW AND REPORTING OF THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

5.1 The CIPFA/SOLACE guidance recommends that authorities should undertake annual reviews of their governance arrangements to ensure continuing compliance with best practice as set out in the framework.

5.2 On the 28 March, a governance workshop was held with key officers of the Council who have the most appropriate knowledge, expertise and levels of seniority to consider the extent to which the organisation complies with the principles set out in the good governance framework. The principles were discussed in length and evidence was put forward to demonstrate how the council was meeting each of the principles. It was also an opportunity to identify any issues or gaps that could lead to a weaker governance structure.

5.3 In addition, evidence to produce the statement was also collected from a number of other sources, namely:

- The views of Internal Audit through regular progress reports, the Annual Internal Audit Opinion and the review of the effectiveness of Internal Audit;
- The views and reports of our External Auditors in their value for money opinion, and the
- The examination of risk reports, risk registers and an overview of the risk management process.

5.4 Following this meeting, this information was collated and a draft statement was produced and circulated for comment. The final draft version of the statement is presented to Audit Committee for approval. Once approved by the Audit Committee, the statement is then signed by the Leader and Chief Executive and will ultimately form part of the 2021/22 Statement of Accounts. The draft

Annual Governance Statement can be updated up to the date of the signing of the Statement of Accounts.

## **6.0 HOW WE COMPLY WITH THE CIPFA/SOLACE FRAMEWORK**

6.1 Set out below is how the council has complied with the seven core principles set out in the CIPFA / SOLACE framework during 2021/22.

### **Core Principle A - Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.**

#### Behaving with integrity

- Established codes of conduct define expected standards of personal behaviour for both staff and Elected Members.
- The council has a set of corporate values for its staff reflecting public expectations about the conduct and behaviour of individuals and these are reflected in the recruitment and selection and performance appraisal processes.
- The Council has a refreshed Member Code of Conduct in place that helps to achieve high standards of conduct for Elected Members.
- A number of Elected Members have recently attended training in relation to 'Ethical Standards' and the recently refreshed Code of Conduct.
- Induction training is in place for both staff and newly Elected Members.
- Arrangements are in place to ensure that Elected Members and employees of the council are not influenced by prejudice, bias or conflicts of interest in dealing with different stakeholders.
- A register of interests is maintained for Elected Members and officers.
- An up-to-date register of gifts and hospitality is maintained for officers and is reviewed annually by the Monitoring Officer and the Audit Committee.
- There is an efficient Standards Committee.
- Arrangements are in place for whistleblowing, to which all officers, Elected Members and all those contracting with the council have access. The policy is reviewed annually by the Audit Committee.
- Arrangements are in place so that conflicts of interest on behalf of Elected Members and officers are avoided.
- Effective, transparent and accessible arrangements are in place for dealing with complaints.

#### Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values

- The Head of Governance and Business Support champions ethical compliance for both officers and Elected Members.
- Ethical Governance Surveys are carried out every three years to test both staff and Elected Members' knowledge and understanding of the council's key policies and procedures. The last staff survey was carried out in 2019 and the Member survey took place during November 2021.
- Protocols are in place for partnership working. These are documented in the council's Financial Regulations and Financial Procedure Rules and reviewed

annually.

- A competency framework, listing required behaviours and values, is currently used to drive recruitment and regular performance reviews are undertaken as part of the performance appraisal system.
- Policies and procedures are in place and are regularly reviewed for dealing with unacceptable behaviours.

#### Respecting the rule of law

- The authority observes both the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer and the Head of Internal Audit in Local Government with any non-compliance reported in the Annual Governance Statement.
- The Constitution sets out the responsibilities of Elected Members by defining the decision-making powers of the Council, Executive, Overview and Scrutiny and regulatory and other committees, providing clear terms of reference, and describing roles and functions.
- The new Chief Internal Auditor is a 'Certified' Internal Auditor and has extensive internal audit experience.
- The Head of Governance and Business Support is a Certified and Chartered Auditor (CIA, CMIIA) and also holds a Qualification in Internal Audit Leadership (QIAL).
- Anti-fraud and anti-corruption policies are in place and reviewed annually by Audit Committee.
- The Monitoring Officer is responsible to the council for ensuring that agreed procedures are followed and that all applicable statutes and regulations are complied with.
- All allegations concerning breaches of the Code of Conduct by Elected Members are thoroughly investigated by the Monitoring Officer.
- Up to date job descriptions and person specifications are maintained for the Chief Executive, Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer.
- All staff and Elected Members have completed Data Protection training in 2018, however it is recognised the need for an immediate refresh. This will be arranged for the newly Elected Members in May 2023.
- Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulation training was provided to Service Managers in February 2022.
- Subject Access Request training was provided to all officers involved in the administration of these in February 2022.
- Regular training is provided to Elected Members who sit on regulatory committees such as Planning, Licensing and the Audit Committee.
- Specific legislative requirements are observed, as well as the requirements of general law, and in particular the key principle of good administrative law, rationality, legality and natural justice form part of procedures and decision-making.
- Proper professional advice on matters that have legal or financial implications is available and when sought, recorded in advance of decision-making.
- Limits of lawful activity are recognised by the ultra vires doctrine and managers strive to utilise their powers to the full benefit of the community.
- The Council's Constitution has recently been amended to allow 'Non-Executive Decisions' to be taken under 'Emergency Powers' in the event of an on-going



pandemic.

## **Core Principle B – Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.**

### Openness

- A business plan is published annually giving information on the council's strategic narrative, priorities and performance measures which is shared with all officers, Members, partners and the community.
- An annual Statement of Accounts is produced with an easy to read narrative report.
- The annual efficiency statement is published with the revenue estimates.
- The Corporate Director Resources (Section 151 Officer) is responsible for publishing annual accounts, in a timely manner and within statutory deadlines, to communicate the council's activities and achievements, its financial position and performance. The draft 2020/21 accounts are awaiting formal sign-off following delays by External Audit and now a review on infrastructure asset treatment by CIPFA.
- The council as a whole is open and accessible to the community, service users and its officers and is committed to openness and transparency in all its dealings, subject only to the need to preserve confidentiality in those specific circumstances where it is proper and appropriate to do so.
- The council's compliance to the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 was last reviewed as part of the Information Governance / GDPR compliance audit work that took place during 2021/22. Gaps were identified, which will be addressed through the action plan.
- Wyre Voice, an information leaflet produced by the council, is delivered to every household annually with a monthly E-newsletter being sent to those who have subscribed.
- A monthly newsletter 'core brief' is produced and cascaded to all staff.
- Periodic reports are produced on Overview and Scrutiny function activity.
- Key decisions are published in the Schedule of Executive Decisions.
- All audio recordings of Council meetings are available on the council's website and YouTube.
- A property investment panel has been established which considers proposals for investment opportunities.
- The Council website complies with the New Accessibility Regulations 2019.
- Hybrid working / staff feedback sessions were held with CMT and were open to all staff in autumn 2021.

### Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders

- The council continues to meet regularly with the YMCA to oversee the operation of the council's leisure centres and pools.
- The council has established a Beach Management Board that meet on a monthly basis to oversee the sea defences scheme which is estimated to cost £42m. Internal Audit attend each meeting.
- Key partnerships are periodically reviewed through the internal audit plan and the

Financial Regulations and Financial Procedure Rules include advice and guidance which can assist officers in managing the key risks of partnership arrangements.

- Corporate guidance has been issued on consultation and public involvement mechanisms offering practical steps and advice.
- The council maintains links with the parish and town councils by regular attendance at the Lancashire Association of Local Councils (LALC) meetings.
- Clear channels of communication are in place with all sections of the community and other stakeholders including monitoring arrangements to ensure that they operate effectively, e.g. flood forums and the Waste Management Partnership Board.
- The council continues to support the food banks (Over Wyre / Fleetwood) established in response to the recent pandemic.
- Approximately £90,000 of grants have been distributed during 2021/22 to local community groups made available from the Household Support Fund.

#### Engaging with individual citizens and service users effectively

- The council's vision, strategic plans, priorities and targets are developed through robust mechanisms, and in consultation with the local community and other key stakeholders, and are clearly articulated and disseminated.
- Arrangements are in place to enable the council to engage with all sections of the community effectively. These arrangements recognise that different sections of the community have different priorities and there are explicit processes for dealing with these competing demands.
- The council has a Digital Hub located at the Fleetwood Market in partnership with Citizens Advice to provide additional support to residents to help them develop their digital skills.
- A 'together we make a difference network' is in place. This informal membership network led by the council is made up of council officers, Elected Members and partners from all sectors with the aim to enable local people to make a difference in their local communities.
- The council undertakes regular consultations and all are available through the online consultation portal.

### **Core Principle C – Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.**

#### Defining outcomes

- The Council has made a clear statement of its vision, ambitions, key programmes and projects in its business plan (2019 – 2023) which is used for service and corporate planning.
- The business plan includes a set of measures defining outcomes which are reported quarterly to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- There are effective arrangements to deal with failure in service delivery.
- There is a corporate complaints procedure with annual reports from the Local Government Ombudsman are available on the website.
- The medium term financial plan (MTFP) / revenue estimates and capital

programme are soundly based and are designed to deliver the council's strategic priorities.

- The council's approach to value for money is reflected in the annual efficiency statement reported to Cabinet with targets and achievements monitored throughout the year.
- Strategic, operational and ICT (including cyber security) risk registers are maintained on a dedicated risk management system. Risk workshops are held throughout the year to review current risks and controls and identify any new risks. Risk registers are reviewed quarterly, in line with the Risk Management Policy and Procedure.

#### Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefit

- The council embraces community engagement and involvement and encourages neighbourhood engagement and works collectively with ward councillors, parish and town councillors, community groups and other partner organisations to identify local issues and priorities.
- Following the declaration of a climate emergency in July 2019 the Council continues to work through a comprehensive action plan of key issues effecting both council services and the wider community.
- In recognition of our progress on climate change, the council has been accredited as a Bronze level Carbon Literate Organisation. We are the first authority in Lancashire to achieve this status.
- Our business plan states a number of ambitions which will improve the health and wellbeing of our communities.
- Relationships have been established with clinical leads from the Blackpool, Preston, Morecambe Bay and Fylde Coast Clinical Commissioning Groups with a view to influencing service provision.
- The business plan is subject to an equality impact assessment on an annual basis.
- The development and delivery of the local plan has been subject to extensive consultation.
- Individual projects are equality impact assessed promoting access to services.
- Our 'together we make a difference network' works with the community to identify priority projects, makes links with partners, develops relationships with key stakeholders and helps facilitate the delivery of community priorities.
- The council has been awarded a number of both green and blue flag awards for our clean beaches and parks and open spaces.
- The council's Constitution considers 'Social Value' when procuring goods and services.
- The council is working with Historic England to develop a proposed scheme to create new ways to champion and revive Fleetwood's historic high streets.
- The council continues to work closely with Associated British Ports and other partners to bring new commercial floor space at Fleetwood Docks to help safeguard the fish processing industry for Fleetwood (Project Neptune).
- The council operates a weekly online community lottery to provide good causes and community groups with a simple way to raise funds.
- The council continues to work and support local business following the pandemic through the development and implementation of the Wyre Local Growth Plan.

- £300,000 was allocated during 2021/22 towards a new town centre strategy fund which was formed to support our town centres following the pandemic.

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

### Determining interventions

- There are mechanisms in place for documenting evidence for decisions and recording the criteria, rationale and considerations on which decisions are based.
- Those making decisions are provided with information that is fit for purpose and relevant.
- Limits of lawful activity are recognised by the ultra vires doctrine and managers strive to utilise their powers to the full benefit of the community.
- Proper, professional advice on matters that have legal or financial implications is available and when sought, recorded in advance of decision making.
- A Digital Transformation Board is in place to oversee key ICT infrastructure projects.

### Planning interventions

- The Council's business plan is refreshed annually and is subject to review by Overview and Scrutiny prior to approval by Full Council.
- Business plan actions are managed by officers and monitored by Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- The business plan is developed taking into account demographic information, including locality plans, neighbourhood profiles and public health reports.
- Service quality is regularly reviewed via the council's formal complaints system, the Waste Management Partnership Board and the Wyre Leisure Management Partnership Board.
- The business plan includes a set of measures which are reported quarterly to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- The MTFP, revenue estimates and capital programme are published annually and are key documents for forecasting our budget requirements and planning ahead.
- An efficiency programme compliments the MTFP ensuring sustainability going forward.
- We explore opportunities to work with our partners and collaborate on funding applications.

### Optimising achievement of intended outcomes

- The MTFP is agreed annually in October and updated regularly and published with the revenue estimates in February.
- The MTFP, revenue estimates and capital programme are soundly configured to meet the requirements of the business plan.
- The MTFP sets out the framework for corporately managing the council's resources in the years ahead.

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

### Developing the Entity’s capacity

- The council continues to support the YMCA and allocated a further £720,000 subsidy at the start of 2021/22 to the YMCA. The YMCA has operated within the subsidy budget and are reporting a significant underspend of £500,000.
- Effective mechanisms exist to monitor service delivery through the Overview and Scrutiny arrangements and quarterly performance reports highlight where corrective action is necessary.
- A key activity in the council’s business plan is to continue the programme of works to maximise the use of our assets.
- The council subscribes to the APSE advisory service, with a view to benchmarking its front line services.
- Benchmarking is undertaken periodically via relevant Lancashire professional groups e.g. revenues, audit, finance etc.
- The council’s performance appraisal system allows for documentation of the development of the individual through their personal development plan.
- Internal Audit received a ‘full compliance’ overall opinion when assessed against the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) in 2018. The next assessment is due in March 2023. Internal self-assessments continue to take place annually.
- The council regularly benchmarks Elected Member’s allowances as part of the review undertaken by the Independent Remuneration Panel. The last full review was completed in April 2022.
- The council attends the Lancashire Waste Partnership and are currently evaluating if a revised Lancashire Waste Strategy is required following the release of the DEFRA Resources and Waste Strategy 2018, and new Environment Act 2021 Legislation being introduced, with any consultation including advisory groups such as the Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC), Waste and Resource Action Programme (WRAP) and Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE).

### Developing the capacity of the entity’s leadership and other individuals

- The Chief Executive is responsible and accountable to the council for all aspects of operational management and attends regular performance appraisal meetings with the Leader of the Council.
- The Corporate Director Resources (Section 151 officer) is responsible to the council for ensuring that appropriate advice is given on all financial matters, for keeping proper financial records and accounts, and for maintaining an effective system of internal financial control.
- There is an established pay and grading structure for employees referred to as the job evaluation system and a process for appeals.
- There is a clearly defined management structure and a scheme of delegation to officers, which is underpinned by the Members’ Code of Conduct and a protocol for officer / Elected Member relations.

- There are published job descriptions and established protocols, which ensure that the Leader and Chief Executive establish their respective roles early in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained.
- Financial Regulations and Financial Procedure Rules are reviewed annually by the Audit Committee.
- Career structures are in place where possible for Elected Members and officers to facilitate succession planning.
- Funding was made available to fund up to six new apprenticeship posts in 2021. To date, two posts have been filled, with a further three commencing in Summer 2022.
- Effective management arrangements are in place both at the top of and throughout the organisation to support the health and wellbeing of officers.
- The council assesses the skills required by Elected Members and officers and makes a commitment to develop these to enable roles to be carried out effectively.
- The council ensures that the statutory officers have the skills, resources and support necessary to perform effectively in their roles and that these roles are properly understood throughout the council.
- Training programmes are tailored to meet individual needs and there are opportunities for Elected Members and officers to update their knowledge on a regular basis.
- Skills are developed on a continuing basis to improve performance, including the ability to scrutinise and challenge and to recognise when outside expert advice is needed.
- Arrangements are in place via the volunteering initiative to encourage individuals from all sections of the community to engage with, contribute to and participate in the work of the Authority.
- A competency framework exists to ensure that all staff have appropriate skills enabling them to deliver high quality services.

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

Managing risk

- Risk management is embedded into the culture of the council, with Elected Members and managers at all levels recognising that risk management is part of their job.
- The Risk Management Policy and Procedure is refreshed annually and approved by the Audit Committee.
- Strategic, Operational and ICT (including cyber security) risk registers are managed through a dedicated risk management system. Workshops are held regularly to review current risks and identify any new risks.
- Most services have detailed Information Asset Registers in place which are reviewed by Internal Audit as part of each audit review ensuring compliance with legislation and demonstrating best practice in information governance. The gaps have been identified and the Information Governance Group will monitor

the gaps to ensure they are addressed in a timely manner.

- In March 2022, all officers responsible for answering Freedom of Information, Environmental Information Requests and Subject Access Requests attended mandatory training from an external provider.

### Managing performance

- Performance is regularly reported to the Corporate Management Team, Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- The council has an Overview and Scrutiny Committee which allows for constructive challenge and enhances the council's performance overall.
- There are effective mechanisms for documenting evidence for decisions and recording the criteria, rationale and considerations on which decisions are based.
- There is a calendar of dates for submitting, publishing and distributing timely reports to the council's committees.
- A workshop was held in February 2022 with Overview and Scrutiny and CMT to agree the Committee's work programme for 2022/23.

### Robust internal control

- An effective Internal Audit function is adequately resourced and maintained.
- Internal audit reviews are conducted under the Auditing Practices Board guidelines and in line with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).
- In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, an annual assessment of the council's systems of Internal Audit is carried out using the PSIAS and the checklist provided in the Local Government Application Note published by CIPFA. The standards also require an external assessment be carried out every five years. In April 2018 the Internal Audit Services received a 'full compliance' overall opinion following an external assessment carried out by Allerdale Borough Council and Preston City Council. The next review is scheduled for February 2023.
- A quality assurance improvement programme (QAIP) is in place to ensure the continual improvement of the internal audit service.
- An Audit Committee is in place, which is independent of the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny function.
- The Audit Committee undertakes an annual review of its own effectiveness against the checklist in the CIPFA guidance 'effective audit committees' and is satisfied that it meets the required standard with only two minor actions identified following the last review in June 2022.
- Both the Audit and Risk Manager (Chief Internal Auditor) and the Audit, Risk and Performance Lead have extensive experience in internal audit. The current Chief Internal Auditor is a Certified Internal Auditor.
- The Head of Governance and Business Support holds both the Chartered Auditor and a Qualification in Internal Audit Leadership.
- The implementation of internal audit reports recommendations is monitored by the Internal Audit Team and the Audit Committee.
- Counter-fraud policies are in place and reviewed annually. The effectiveness of these policies is reviewed on a regular basis.
- The council has an effective whistleblowing policy which is reviewed annually

by the Audit Committee.

#### Managing data

- In 2018, both staff and Elected Members received data protection training. Refresher training will be provided by September 2022 for staff and May 2023 for the newly elected Members.
- The council has appointed a Data Protection Officer (and a Deputy) who is responsible for ensuring the council's compliance with any Data Protection Legislation.
- The Audit Committee have delegated responsibility for ensuring the council is compliant to data protection legislation and receives six monthly updates from the Head of Governance and Business Support
- In March 2022, the Audit Committee were given delegated responsibility for Cyber Security. The Committee will receive updates as part of the audit and risk Management update in June / November.
- Information Asset Registers are in place for the majority of services to demonstrate the council knows what data it processes, where it is stored and how it is shared (data flows) internally and externally.
- Information is stored securely and confidential waste disposal arrangements are in place.
- Key performance data is regularly reviewed for accuracy by internal audit.

#### Strong public financial management

- Those making decisions are provided with information that is fit for purpose, relevant, timely and gives clear explanations of technical and financial issues and their implications.
- Up to date registers of gifts and hospitality are held for both Elected Members and officers, demonstrating openness and transparency.
- Registers of interests are maintained for both officers and Elected Members.
- There is an established pay and grading structure in place for employees.
- Financial Regulations and Financial Procedures Rules are reviewed annually and any changes are presented to the Audit Committee for approval.
- It is expected that the External Auditors will issue an unqualified value for money conclusion for the 2020/21 financial year.

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

#### Implementing good practice in transparency

- Wyre Voice, an information leaflet produced by the council is delivered to every house in the Borough.
- An easy to read 'narrative report' accompanies the Statement of Accounts.
- The Local Government Ombudsman annual report is presented to Full Council and also published on the council's website.
- The council has recently completed a review of its compliance to the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 and is working towards full compliance. Any gaps in compliance will be monitored by the Information



## Governance Group.

### Implementing good practices in reporting

- Annual presentations are delivered for Elected Members concerning the council's finances as part of the production of the revenue estimates, the capital programme and the update of the MTFP.
- A set of questions and answers supports the financial position at the year-end illustrating key issues for members of the Audit Committee and the relevant stakeholders.
- The annual efficiency statement is published alongside the revenue estimates as part of the report to Cabinet in February.
- The Annual Governance Statement is regularly reviewed by the Section 151 Officer and the Head of Governance and Business Support. The action plan is monitored by Corporate Management Team and reported to Audit Committee in June / November each year.
- Project management information is available for Elected Members via spreadsheets.
- Executive update reports are prepared and delivered by portfolio holders to Full Council.

### Assurance and effective accountability

- An effective internal audit function is resourced and maintained enabling the Audit and Risk Manager (Chief Internal Auditor) to deliver an annual internal audit opinion.
- The Chief Internal Auditor has reported in her Annual Audit Report that reasonable assurances can be given on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's governance, risk management, and control processes (i.e. the system of internal control). This means that 'generally' there is a sound system of internal control, governance and risk management and that controls are in place and are generally being applied consistently. Whilst some issues, non-compliance or scope for improvement were identified recommendations have been made and if implemented will improve the control environment.
- In accordance with the Audit and Account Regulations 2015, an annual assessment of the effectiveness of the internal audit function is completed and presented to the Audit Committee with any areas of non-compliance documented in an action plan and in the Internal Audit Quality and Assurance Improvement Programme.
- The Audit Committee work programme provides the opportunity for the Chief Internal Auditor to have a private and confidential discussion with the Audit Committee members.
- The council participates in RIPA inspections as and when required. The last inspection was carried out in January 2022 with only minor observations being made.
- Key partnerships are periodically reviewed through the internal audit plan with delivery via third parties being included in the assurance reviews undertaken annually.
- The Financial Regulations and Financial Procedure Rules include partnership

guidance which can assist officers in managing the key risks of any partnership arrangements.

- Clear terms of reference exist for the key partnerships, clarifying arrangements for accountability, for example the Waste Management Partnership and the Community Safety Partnership.

## **7.0 RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**

- 7.1 The council has adopted a corporate Risk Management Policy and Procedure and now operates a fully integrated risk management system (GRACE) across the organisation.
- 7.2 Each year the council's Corporate Management Team (CMT), Head of Governance and Business Support, Audit and Risk Manager and the Audit Committee Chairman attend a strategic risk workshop, to identify and prioritise risks and to produce an action plan. This year the workshop took place on 18 March 2022. The results of this workshop can be found at Appendix 3 of the Annual Internal Audit Report for 2021/22. At the workshop, significant business risks that may impact upon the council's priorities (the business plan) are identified and assessed, and appropriate control measures are in put place. The report and associated action plan is presented to Audit Committee and progress is monitored on a quarterly basis through the CMT.
- 7.3 Operational risk workshops were held this year following the strategic risk workshop in March, with each service unit identifying new risks that could occur during the year preventing the achievement of individual service plans. All staff who have responsibilities for identified risks are encouraged to review their risks and update their action plans continually throughout the year. However, a number of prompts were issued to staff to ensure progress was documented.
- 7.4 In June 2021, the council purchased a risk management system (GRACE) to fully automate the risk management process and remove Internal Audit from the management and administration of risk allowing them to give a more independent and objective opinion on the effectiveness of the risk management processes across the council. The council's operational, strategic and ICT risks are now populated within GRACE and action plans have been added to assist with the mitigation of the risks identified. Whilst the Audit Committee do not have access to GRACE, strategic risk reports are produced and presented to the Committee on a regular basis. The council's ICT risk register continues to be monitored quarterly by the Corporate Director Resources, Head of Contact Centre and ICT and the Audit and Risk Manager (Chief Internal Auditor).
- 7.5 Following the pandemic, staff have welcomed the return of face-to-face risk workshops and have participated well. The council's risk management and assurance framework continues to be well supported by CMT, the Audit Committee and across the organisation. All risk owners attended training for the new GRACE system, and so far, it seems to have been well received. The

changes to the risk management process were documented in a 'refreshed' Risk Management Policy and Procedure and was approved by Audit Committee in November 2021.

## **8.0 EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL CONTROL**

8.1 In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the council must ensure that it has a sound system of internal control which:

- a) facilitates the effective exercise of its functions and the achievement of its aims and objectives,
- b) ensures that the financial and operational management of the council is effective; and
- c) includes effective arrangements for the management of risk.

8.2 The council is also responsible for conducting a review each financial year of the effectiveness of the system of internal control.

8.3 The Corporate Director Resources (Section 151 Officer) is responsible for the proper administration of the council's financial affairs. This includes responsibility for maintaining and reviewing Financial Regulations and Financial Procedure Rules, to ensure they remain fit for purpose, submitting any additions or changes necessary to the Audit Committee for approval and reporting, where appropriate, breaches of the Regulations to the Cabinet and/or the Council.

8.4 Wyre Council's internal audit service, via a specific responsibility assigned to the Audit and Risk Manager (Chief Internal Auditor) is required to provide an independent and objective opinion to the council on its risk management, governance and internal control environment. The Chief Internal Auditor's Annual report for 2021/22 concluded that 'reasonable assurances can be given on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's governance, risk management, and control processes (i.e. the system of internal control)'. This means that 'generally' there is a sound system of internal control, governance and risk management and that controls are in place and are generally being applied consistently. Whilst some issues, non-compliance or scope for improvement were identified recommendations have been made and if implemented will improve the control environment. It goes further and states that council's risk management and assurance framework and overall governance processes continue to be well supported and operate effectively across the organisation with key officers participating in face-to-face risk workshops and in the formulation of the Annual Governance Statement.

## **9.0 VALUE FOR MONEY CONCLUSION**

9.1 The External Auditors issued an unqualified value for money conclusion in their last and most recent review for 2019/20. This means that they are satisfied that the Authority had appropriate arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of its resources. They raised no high priority recommendations as a result of their work. It should be noted that owing to delays on the part of the external auditor in the signing off of the

2020/21 accounts, no more recent VFM conclusion has been received although no issues have been raised with the S.151 Officer to date.

## **10.0 SIGNIFICANT GOVERNANCE ISSUES IDENTIFIED**

- 10.1 No significant governance issues have been raised that require documenting separately in the Annual Governance Statement for 2021/22. However, when reviewing compliance to the guidance, a number of minor issues have been identified which have been documented in an action plan monitored by Corporate Management Team and reported to the Audit Committee prior to sign off then again in November each year. In addition, it has been identified that internal controls have not been followed in relation to a contract procurement and steps are being taken to resolve the matter.
- 10.2 There were no significant governance issues raised in the 2020/21 Annual Governance Statement that were required to be followed-up and the minor issues identified at that time have been monitored throughout the year and were last reported to the Audit Committee in November 2021. These issues have either been implemented or have been carried forward to the 2021/22 action plan.

## **11.0 CHALLENGES FROM COVID-19**

- 11.1 This section considers the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the adequacy of the governance arrangements during this period.

### Impact on business as usual in the delivery of services

- 11.2 Similar to 2020/21, social distancing measures continued to have an impact on the council's decision-making procedures, particularly in 2021. MHCLG laid regulations before Parliament in April 2020 to provide flexibility in relation to local authority meetings held between 4 April 2020 and 6 May 2021. These regulations provided for remote access to meetings of local authorities by members of a local authority and by the press and public. The council put arrangements in place to hold meetings virtually, allowing elected members to fully engage in taking key decisions and to allow for public participation. The majority of the meetings in 2021/22 took place after this legislation expired and were face to face, although some were held in quorate in order to preserve social distancing during the rise of the Omicron variant. All of our formal virtual meetings have been broadcast live and made available on our website and on our YouTube Channel. During the period to September 2020 prior to the commencement of virtual meetings, to enable decisions to be made during the crisis, delegated powers were also given to the Chief Executive and other officers in consultation with the Leader and Group Leaders. This meant that the council was able to respond to urgent matters swiftly, particularly during the first lockdown. These powers remained in place as a fall-back position until May 2021 but were exercised by exception only.
- 11.3 Home working was facilitated for the majority of office-based council staff during the pandemic and this remains in place as an option for hybrid workers. The norm for full time hybrid workers is to work an average of two days per

week from home and this is kept under review as part of staff 1-2-1 discussions with managers.

- 11.4 All services have continued to operate as normal where possible. All of the council's activities were risk assessed and additional control measures were put in place. These included social distancing in offices, extra PPE, hand sanitizers, plastic screens, photocopier stylus and implementing new changes to work patterns. Where essential, home visits and property / business inspections were carried out under Covid-19 secure protocols. Maintaining front line services was one of the council's priorities during the pandemic with the council working hard with our waste collection provider to ensure the household, garden and bulky waste service continued as normal.
- 11.5 The Communications Team have used the council's website, Facebook page and Twitter to keep our customers / residents up to date with changing legislation and we have worked hard to ensure that they feel comfortable when using our services or visiting our buildings in limited circumstances. We have retained limited opening hours for our reception counter at the Civic Centre and we encourage customers to sign up for a 'MyWyre' account which allows for greater self-service 24/7. Ultimately, business as normal largely returned during 2021/22 with the gradual, stepped lifting of Covid-19 restrictions.

#### Funding consequences during the local government response

- 11.6 The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has had a financial impact on the council which is still being felt. Emergency Covid-19 funding from central government in conjunction with other Covid related grant streams and the Sales, Fees and Charges income compensation scheme have helped to cushion the council from the impact. It is likely though that ongoing pressures will increase as this funding ceases and whilst the council's reserves and balances are healthy this position will need to be monitored going forward. This will be particularly important in light of the 'cost of living crisis' caused by high inflation and rising energy prices partly caused by the conflict in Ukraine.

#### Longer-term disruption and consequences arising from the coronavirus pandemic

- 11.7 It is essential that the council focuses on the likely impact that the crisis, and its aftermath, will have on income levels both now and potentially into the future. It is difficult to make a reliable estimate of the full impact on the future, financial years. It could be difficult for councils to reduce their spending back to pre-crisis levels and income streams will not necessarily bounce back quickly, especially if the local economy and residents are struggling to cope with the increased cost of living. This means that the assumptions underlying later years in the MTFP will almost certainly need to change, making the 'funding gap' for 2022/23 and beyond larger. A more detailed review will be undertaken as part of the MTFP update to Cabinet in October.

#### Positive outcomes for the council

11.8 The pandemic has not been without some positive outcomes for the council. The council provided sound leadership during the crisis with the ability to move resources around to ensure that it had the capacity to respond and change at pace where needed. Staff have demonstrated that they can adapt well and change working practices and culture to deliver services successfully virtually and remotely. The pandemic strengthened the resilience of some aspects of ICT, particularly remote working capability. Work to our ICT infrastructure continued during the pandemic and further improvements are planned. It has facilitated a move towards more agile working practices such as hot desking, with less reliance on physical office space, providing the catalyst to make changes, which people are accepting of, without the normal change curve and inherent tensions.

## **12.0 FINANCIAL MANGEMENT CODE**

12.1 CIPFA have introduced a new Financial Management code which is set to be implemented from 2021/22, with 2020/21 acting as a 'shadow year'. This timetable remains despite the pandemic but it is acknowledged that many authorities will still be working towards compliance during 2021/22 and beyond. The Code is designed to reflect the position local authorities find themselves in whereby the challenges of reduced funding and increased demand for services means that robust financial management is more important than ever. A series of high profile issues faced by a number of local authorities in recent times has highlighted the need to embed the principles of good financial management across all the ways that council's operate. As such, the Code sets out minimum standards and principles that authorities should seek to achieve. It is designed to be flexible to the nature, needs and circumstances of individual authorities and it is for each to determine to what degree they comply with the code and where further steps may be required.

12.2 The council's S.151 Officer has carried out a review of the Financial Management Standards and is confident that the council can demonstrate compliance against each. That is not to say that improvements cannot be made and one area has been identified for further development. This relates to long-term financial planning which has been problematic owing to the succession of one year financial settlements in recent times and the intention of central government to undertake significant reforms to local government funding with little actual progress being made, not least owing to the ongoing pandemic.

12.3 Currently a long-term capital programme is published as part of the Capital Strategy but the equivalent is not published for the revenue forecast. Whilst many councils have reduced their Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) period to one or two years owing to the uncertainty of government funding, Wyre's MTFP period has been increased to a five year plan (current year plus four years). This was deemed prudent by the S.151 Officer despite the lack of a multi-year settlement and is intended as a bridge to when more clarity is delivered about the Fair Funding Review and other delayed reforms. The MTFP acts as an 'early warning system' for the council's finances and is strengthened by maintaining a true medium-term approach.

12.4 Whilst longer term forecasting is fraught with uncertainty, there are approaches the council can take to undertaking more horizon scanning around the impact of factors such as increasing demand, aging population, climate change and hybrid working to name a few. An exercise will be undertaken to commence capturing these longer-term drivers of costs and income with the Senior Leadership Team in order to strengthen the long-term financial planning at the council and improve compliance with the new Code. Without multi-year settlements though, any forecasting will prove difficult to produce with any accuracy and this remains the position for all local authorities.

### **13.0 OVERALL OPINION ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COUNCIL'S GOVERNANCE ARRANGMENTS**

13.1 As reported in the Annual Internal Audit report for 2021/22 it is again pleasing to report that governance processes and the overall framework across the organisation have been well supported and have continued to operate effectively.

### **14.0 CERTIFICATION**

***As the Leader of the Council, I am aware of the governance issues within this Authority and of the measures that are needed to improve the control environment. Overall, my assessment of the control environment as at 31 March 2022 is satisfactory.***

**COUNCILLOR D HENDERSON**  
**LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

***As the Chief Executive, I am aware of the governance issues within this Authority and of the measures that are needed to improve the control environment. Overall, my assessment of the control environment as at 31 March 2022 is satisfactory.***

**G PAYNE**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT ACTION PLAN 2021/22**

<b>Governance Issue</b>	<b>Year relating to</b>	<b>Finding</b>	<b>Action required</b>	<b>Officer Responsible</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
<b>ICT Disaster Recovery / Cyber Resilience</b>	C/F 2018/19	Whilst an ICT disaster recovery plan was initially drafted in 2018/19 this has yet to be finalised.	The Disaster Recovery Plan needs to be finalised and rolled out as soon as possible.	Lee Brophy / Peter Mason	Immediate
		Whilst some work has been completed to ensure the council is protected as much as possible from cyber attacks, including carrying out a self-assessment of gaps/key risks, the council has still to progress a separate Cyber Resilience Plan.	A separate Cyber Resilience Plan needs to be developed to take into consideration the issues raised in the recent cyber self-assessment.	Peter Mason/ Lee Rossi	Immediate
<b>Climate Change</b>	2021/22	The council declared a climate emergency in July 2019 and since this time the council has been working through a comprehensive action plan of issues effecting both council services and the wider community. Whilst good progress has been made in implementing a number of these actions, for example securing £1.2m in grant funding for the decarbonisation of Fleetwood Market and accredited as a Bronze level Carbon Literate Organisation, there is currently only one full time officer leading on climate change. Further work is needed to identify any gaps with the action plan and highlight the key projects (e.g. developing a	More staff need to be encouraged to take part in the Carbon Literacy training to facilitate the achievement of a silver accreditation.  In addition, lead officers needs to be identified to drive forward the key projects to allow progression of the action plan which will allow the council to reduce its carbon emissions by at least 78% by 2035, in line with the UK government targets.	Mark Billington / Kathy Winstanley Sammy Gray	TBC



Governance Issue	Year relating to	Finding	Action required	Officer Responsible	Timescales
		strategy) and then nominate lead officers.			
<b>Social Value</b>	2021/22	Whilst the Council's Constitution considers social value when procuring goods and services and gives some advice, the council does not record or monitor the impacts / outcomes of social value following the procurement of goods and services. Initial investigations were made to procure software that would assist with the recording and monitoring of social value, however it was considered excessive for the council's current needs.	More work needs to be completed in regard to monitoring the impacts / outcomes of social value, particularly with larger contracts, following the procurement of goods and services. Legislation is awaited which will influence any changes.	David Hewitt-Dean	November 2022
<b>Internal Audit Quality Assurance Improvement Programme (QAIP)</b>	2021/22	From 1 June 2021 the Chief Internal Auditor role was allocated to the Audit and Risk Manager. However whilst the postholder has significant audit experience and has already obtained 'Certified' auditor status, she currently does not hold 'Chartered' status as required by the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. Succession plans are in place within the Internal Audit Team and given the current Chief Internal Auditor has indicated she may wish to retire in 2023/24, a decision has been made to allow the Audit, Risk and Performance Lead to undertake the relevant 'Chartered' qualifications.	<p>Whilst the Audit, Risk and Performance Lead obtains the necessary 'Chartered' status, the Head of Governance and Business Support will need to countersign the Internal Audit Self Effectiveness review and also the Annual Audit Opinion.</p> <p>The QAIP needs to be updated to reflect this countersignature arrangement and the</p>	Jo Billington	June 2022

<b>Governance Issue</b>	<b>Year relating to</b>	<b>Finding</b>	<b>Action required</b>	<b>Officer Responsible</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
			requirement for the Audit, Risk and Performance Lead to undertake the necessary 'Chartered' status.		
<b>Report Author Training</b>	2021/22	Whilst a number of changes have been made to the Constitution over the last few years, it is noted that the Report Author Guidance has not been refreshed since 2017, when the last training session for report authors was delivered. It is understood that the introduction of a 'climate change decision wheel' is to be introduced to the decision making process which will also need reflecting in the guidance.	The Report Author Guidance needs to be updated to include any changes made since 2017. It should also include guidance on the new 'climate change decision wheel'. Following which training will need to be arranged with all report authors.	Democratic Services	September 2022
<b>Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA)</b>	2021/22	Following the last inspection in January 2022, a few minor changes are needed to the council's RIPA Policy.	The RIPA policy needs to be reviewed and amended to take into consideration the minor changes recommended by the Inspector in January 2022.	Mary Grimshaw	November 2022
<b>Whistleblowing</b>	2021/22	Following a recent whistleblowing and an external independent assessment of the council's policy and procedures, it was identified that the current policy needs reviewing.	A review of the WB Policy needs to be completed and submitted to the Audit Committee in November 2022 for approval. Following	Jo Billington	November 2022

Governance Issue	Year relating to	Finding	Action required	Officer Responsible	Timescales
			this, the policy will then need to be rolled out to all staff, partners and contractors.		
<b>Information Governance / Data Protection</b> (inc. Transparency Code)	C/F 2018/19	<p>The council continues to work towards ensuring full compliance with the UK GDPR. Whilst the GDPR compliance audit included in the 2021/22 audit plan has yet to be finalised, 'reasonable' assurances have been given by the Auditor that generally there are sound controls in place and that whilst some areas have been identified that require strengthening, the auditor is confident that the majority of the issues identified can be addressed relatively quickly. However, a larger piece of work is needed by service managers to bring the information assets registers up to date.</p> <p>Elected Members have not had any data protection training since 2018. Whilst there will be a module within Learning Pool, there is no plans at this stage to roll out the platform to Elected Members. However an alternative will be sourced.</p>	<p>The draft report for the GDPR compliance audit, which includes recommendations relating to compliance to the Transparency Code needs to be issued asap. The action plan needs to be managed by the Information Governance Group and regular updates need to be provided to CMT through the quarterly Head of Governance and Business Support updates.</p> <p>Need to arrange UK GDPR refresher training for the newly Elected Members in May 2023.</p>	<p>Jo Billington / Jo Porter / Dawn Allen / Karen McLellan</p> <p>Jo Billington / Democratic Services</p>	<p>June 2022</p> <p>May 2023</p>

<b>Governance Issue</b>	<b>Year relating to</b>	<b>Finding</b>	<b>Action required</b>	<b>Officer Responsible</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
<b>Staff Survey</b>	C/F 2019/20	Whilst a full staff survey has not been carried out since 2017/18, there have been a number of staff engagement activities that have taken place; hybrid working and listening sessions at Marine Hall. However, these sessions may not have captured all staff giving every officer an opportunity to raise or voice concerns.	Consideration should be given to carrying out a full staff survey following the pandemic and the introduction of hybrid working, focusing on health and wellbeing following a difficult two years.	Jane Collier / CMT	TBC
<b>Corporate Comments, Compliments and Complaints Procedure</b>	C/F 2019/20	The staff ethical governance survey carried out in October 2018 identified that although staff were aware that the council had a corporate Comments, Compliments and Complaints Procedure, they were less familiar with the content and where to locate it. In addition, it has become apparent that there are limited number of senior officers available to carry out second stage investigations. In response to these findings, the Corporate Apprentices surveyed CMT / HOS to try and capture any issues with the current processes with the object of refreshing the policy and identifying more resources to assist with second stage investigations. Whilst a summary of findings was produced, these have yet to be actioned.	The work completed by the Corporate Apprentices regarding the operation of the corporate Comments, Compliments and Complaints Procedure needs to be finalised with consideration be given to identifying additional resources for the second stage investigations.	Peter Mason / Jo Billington	June 2022

Governance Issue	Year relating to	Finding	Action required	Officer Responsible	Timescales
<b>Competencies, behaviours and values</b>	2021/22	The council's current values framework, which includes the expected values and behaviours, has not been reviewed following the role out of the hybrid working programme. In addition, it is felt that the 'one size fits all' competency framework is not appropriate for Managers and operational staff. HR have already started to work with North West Employers (NWE) to develop a programme which will in the first instance look at refreshing the strategic narrative, followed by the values framework.	HR need to continue to work with NW Employers to develop a programme which will include a review of the current strategic narrative and values framework, with a view to exploring the possibility of introducing further levels of competency for managers and operational staff.	Jane Collier / CMT / HOS	On-going
<b>Member Code of Conduct</b>	C/F 2020/21	<p>Following the recent refresh of the Local Government Act's 'model Code of Conduct', Wyre's code has been benchmarked, refreshed and approved by Full Council. Following this training (Members Behaving Badly) was provided by an external party to Elected Members on the 3 February 2022. However not all Elected Members attended.</p> <p>In addition, following the CPSL review, Central Government responded to the review making a number of observations and recommendations for Local Authorities to consider. It is understood the Monitoring</p>	<p>It is recommended that all Elected Members who were not able to attend the Members Behaving Badly Training are sent the video recording and handouts and certify that they have read and understood the content.</p> <p>In addition, consideration needs to be given to including similar training to newly Elected Members in May 2023.</p>	<p>Democratic Services Immediately</p> <p>Democratic Services May 2023</p>	<p>1 July 2022</p> <p>May 2023</p>

Governance Issue	Year relating to	Finding	Action required	Officer Responsible	Timescales
		Officer (MO), Deputy MO, Head of Governance and Business Support and Democratic Services have met to consider the document and a number of actions are in the process of being actioned.			
<b>Staff Inductions / Training and Development</b>	C/F 2020/21	Whilst the council already has an effective corporate induction process in place, it is in the process of modernising this with the rollout of a e-learning platform 'Learning Pool'. Whilst the new training platform went live in September 2021, work has stalled owing to the lack of resources within Human Resources. It is understood the new induction package will also include a number of mandatory training courses (Data Protection / GDPR and cyber security) which can also be used to refresh existing staff who have not received any data protection training since 2018 and perhaps may never have received any cyber security training.	Following the purchase of Learning Pool, the training package needs to be developed and rolled out to all new starters via the induction process.  In addition, the Data Protection / GDPR and cyber security modules needs to be rolled out to all existing staff as refresher training.	Jane Collier / Marc Whittaker  Joanne Billington / Lee Brophy	September 2022  September 2022
Performance	C/F 2020/21	A performance audit in January 2020 highlighted that the council's processes to monitor the performance of the projects within the council's Business Plan require further enhancement. A new role was created, following which in June 2021 an	A fundamental review of the business plan and the process for monitoring and reporting key projects will be carried out, starting in January 2023 prior to pulling	Marianne Hesketh / Dawn Allen	January 2022

Governance Issue	Year relating to	Finding	Action required	Officer Responsible	Timescales
		<p>Audit, Risk and Performance Lead was appointed to lead on the refresh of monitoring the performance of the projects within the Business Plan. Quarterly monitoring of the projects / measures within the business plan continue to be reported to CMT and Overview and Scrutiny and work is on-going to improve the processes / indicators / measures in place to monitor the performance of the council's key projects. A decision has been made to leave the fundamental review until the council starts pulling together the new business plan for 2023.</p>	<p>together the new four year Business Plan.</p>		
<b>Performance Appraisals</b>	C/F 2020/21	<p>Whilst there are standardised documents for documenting performance appraisals, it has been established that although CMT have conversations that mirror the standardised documentation these discussions are not documented on the same corporate paperwork.</p>	<p>To ensure a consistent approach is established, all CMT need to use the corporate performance appraisal documentation to record their 1-2-1 discussions with the Chief Executive. The NWE programme will support this change with higher level competencies with SLT.</p>	HR / CMT	Immediate
<b>VFM Indicators</b>	2021/22	<p>During the pandemic, the value for money (VFM) indicators were not reviewed as normal and presented to Cabinet and the</p>	<p>Consideration needs to be given to the validity of running the benchmarking</p>	TBC	TBC

<b>Governance Issue</b>	<b>Year relating to</b>	<b>Finding</b>	<b>Action required</b>	<b>Officer Responsible</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
		Overview and Scrutiny Committee.	VFM indicators during the Covid year 2021/22.		