

# **Governance Action Plan**

## **2020-21**

## INTRODUCTION

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the Council is **directed** and **controlled** and the activities through which it is accountable to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its **corporate objectives** and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

We are responsible for ensuring that business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. We also have a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure **continuous improvement** in the way in which our functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of **economy, efficiency** and **effectiveness**.

Each year we publish our **Annual Governance Statement (AGS)**. This is a statutory statement, which explains the processes and procedures in place that enable us to carry out our functions effectively.

As part of drawing the statement together, we assess the arrangements in place. This document supports the AGS and shows in greater detail the outcomes of that assessment and includes an **action plan** for us to ensure we continue to enhance and improve our arrangements where possible.



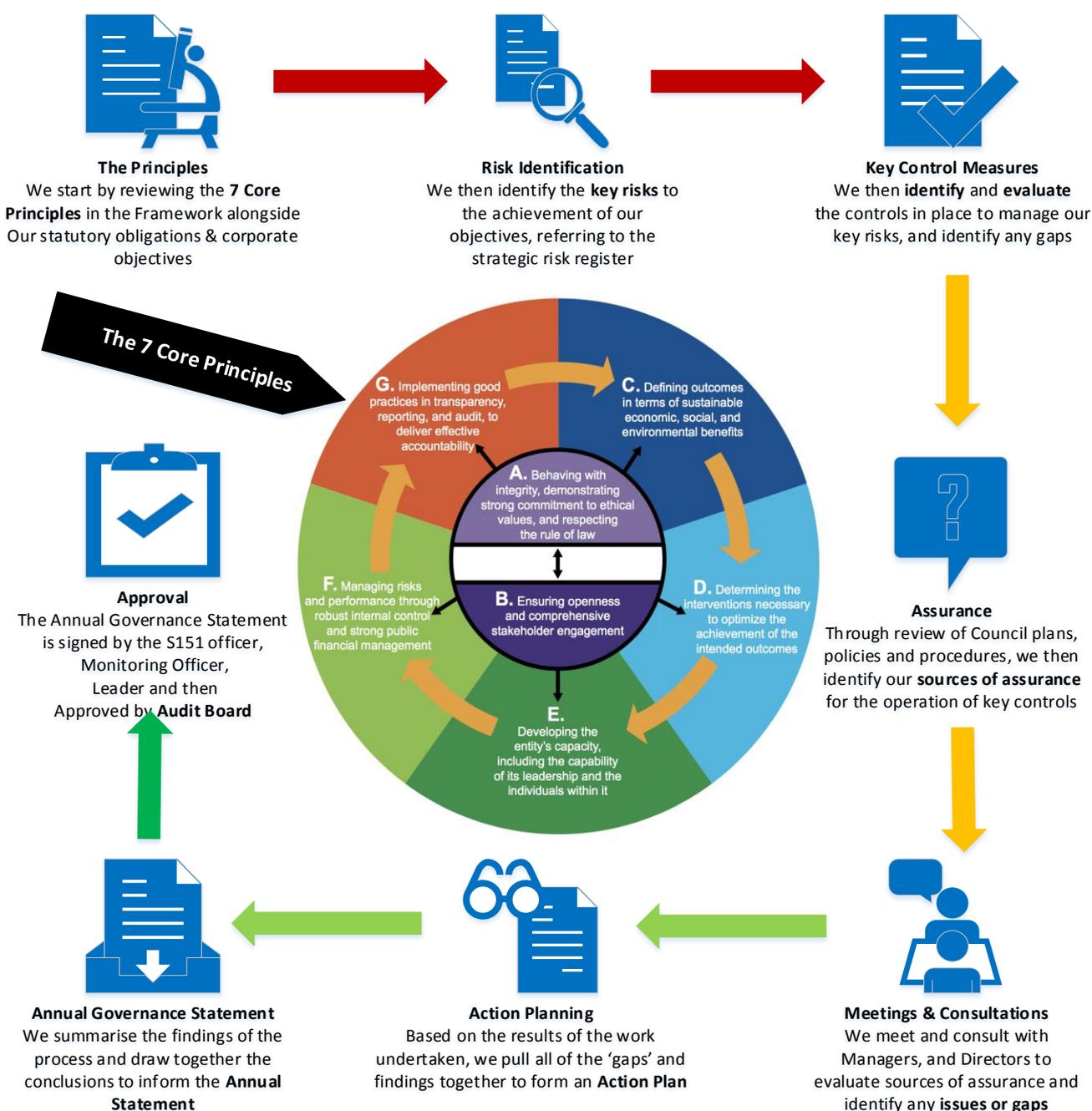
## How do we create the Annual Governance Statement?

### Annual Governance Statement

Corporate Governance is the system of rules, practices and processes that direct and control the Council. Good governance enables us to pursue our **Corporate Plan** effectively, in a way that is well controlled, and where outcomes have been achieved through careful consideration of risk.

As a Local Authority we are required to prepare an Annual Governance Statement in order to report publicly on the extent to which we comply with our own **Code of Governance** and the principles as required through the **CIPFA/SOLACE Delivering Good Governance Framework**.

The process for creating the Annual Governance Statement is designed to ensure that governance issues are captured as they arise. We seek to respond positively and constructively to address any problems, and make sure that we have a clear action plan to track progress. We undertake an annual review and assessment against the principles, and sub-principles of the Framework. The diagram below summarises the process:



## Assessment against the seven principles

The Council has approved and adopted a [Code of Corporate Governance](#). The Code sets out how we apply the principles of corporate governance to the way in which we operate and conduct business. The Code was developed in accordance with the principles outlined in the framework and guidance notes for CIPFA/SOLACE “**Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2016)**”. This Framework, is what all Local Authorities must comply with, not only as a means of demonstrating good governance, but also by preparing an Annual Governance Statement to accompany the Statement of Accounts.

The following tables show how we have assessed our governance arrangements against each of the core principles as set out in the Framework, and in our Code.

### Principle A:

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

#### Examples of how we demonstrate the Principle

- Officer and Members’ Code of Conduct & Constitution
- Employee Handbook & HR Policies
- Appraisals
- Training and awareness
- Declarations of interest/gifts and hospitalities register
- Governance Policies (anti-fraud, whistleblowing, complaints etc.)
- Oversight through Internal Audit, Audit Board and External Assurance providers
- Embedded complaints procedures and processes

#### Areas we seek to continuously improve

- Governance arrangements – such as risk management, counter fraud, and whistleblowing
- Awareness of governance related issues through training and briefings
- Legal compliance

#### Actions for 2020/21

1. Development and implement the workforce strategy & value framework

### Principle B:

*Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement*

#### Examples of how we demonstrate the Principle

- Compliance with FOI, DPA & transparency requirements
- Publication of reports, decisions and minutes
- Consultation and engagement strategy & consultation log
- Public website with access to Council information
- Communications guidance for Officers and Members
- Joint residents involvement liaison group & community engagement
- Equalities duty consultation and impact assessments

#### Areas we seek to continuously improve

- Engagement with stakeholders via the website and feedback
- Use of social media and digital to increase engagement
- Website and interface between the Council and residents
- Partnership working (internal and external)

#### Actions for 2020/21

2. Consider hybrid system for physical and virtual Council meetings

### Principle C:

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

#### Examples of how we demonstrate the Principle

- Corporate Plan
- Related strategies and plans such as Capital Programme, Engagement Strategy, Local Plan
- Clear financial reporting and ongoing budget monitoring
- Equality and diversity framework
- Procurement rules and evaluation criteria
- Community plans and partnership working
- Environmental and sustainable considerations incorporated into planning and key decisions

#### Areas we seek to continuously improve

- Asset management strategy and capital strategy
- Links between service objectives and corporate level outcomes

#### Actions for 2020/21

None

### Principle D:

*Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of intended outcomes*

#### Examples of how we demonstrate the Principle

- Regular monitoring and reporting of activities to Members
- Annual budget planning, and Medium Term Financial Planning and reporting
- Good communication and regular Officer and Member liaison
- Consultation and engagement feedback translated into actions
- Oversight and healthy challenge provided by Scrutiny, Audit Board, and various working / advisory groups
- Performance management framework and monitoring system (Pentana) – targets and tracking regularly monitored

#### Areas we seek to continuously improve

- Service updates and regular reporting of outcomes to Management Team and Members
- Internal communications and cross-cutting issues

#### Actions for 2020/21

3. Review Corporate Plan in light of Covid-19 recovery requirements
4. Review of performance indicators and reporting/monitoring arrangements – effectiveness of management oversight, intervention and delivery of outcomes

### Principle E:

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

#### Examples of how we demonstrate the Principle

- Workforce reporting and monitoring via HR and appraisals
- Training and development plans linked to objectives
- Partnership working and wider multi-agency working
- Schemes of delegations
- Document job profiles, roles and responsibilities
- Member induction, training and development
- Reward and recognition and employee benefits – agile working, wellbeing and employee assistance programme (EAP)

#### Areas we seek to continuously improve

- Organisational training and development
- Skills, expertise and knowledge building – through recruitment and retention
- Succession planning

#### Actions for 2020/21

5. Asset Management review and associated actions planning and tracking
6. Consider new ways of working in a post-Covid 19 environment

**Principle F:**

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

Examples of how we demonstrate the Principle

- Performance management system and reporting to Management and Members
- Internal and External audit arrangements in place
- Transparency through publishing of decisions, spending, scrutiny, Audit Board
- Clear rules and procedures within constitution
- Code of Governance in place, and review of governance arrangements undertaken annually

**Areas we seek to continuously improve**

- Governance arrangements and related policies
- Service transformation and channel shift

**Actions for 2020/21**

7. Complete the refresh and rollout of the risk management framework (strategic level risks and operational)
8. Improve resilience and community capacity to respond to additional peaks in demand.

**Principle G:**

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

Examples of how we demonstrate the Principle

- Publication of Council documents, decisions and useful information, decisions and spend
- Compliance with FOI, DPA and Transparency requirements
- Internal Audit provision provided in partnership with Sevenoaks – audit plan, Charter and Annual Opinion publically reported
- Unqualified External Audit opinion and no adverse findings
- Schemes of delegation and controlled authorisation limits
- Communications Strategy

**Areas we seek to continuously improve**

- Improved partnership delivery with Sevenoaks District Council – including Internal Audit
- Reporting from service level up to Management and Members
- Oversight through Audit Board and audit functions
- Public consultation and feedback

**Actions for 2020/21**

9. Carry out lessons learnt review of Covid-19 response

## Consolidated Governance Action Plan 2020-21

Following review and assessment against the principles as set out in our Governance Code and the CIPFA Framework, we have identified nine actions. These will be tracked and monitored over the course of the year, with the purpose and outcomes being to improve governance and ensure compliance with requirements. Actions and progress will be updated regularly and reported annually to the Audit Board.

Ref	Action	Link to Code & Framework	Co-ordinating Officer	How will success be measured?
1	Develop and implement the workforce strategy & value framework	Principles A, E, F, G	HR Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategy created and adopted</li> <li>• Communication and engagement plan to support rollout</li> </ul>
2	Consider Hybrid system for physical and virtual meetings	Principles A, B	Strategic Director – Internal Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment concluded</li> <li>• System in place and working effectively</li> </ul>
3	Review Corporate plan in light of Covid 19 recovery requirements	Principles A, F, G	Policy and Performance Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Corporate Plan agreed</li> </ul>
4	Review of performance indicators and reporting / monitoring arrangements – effectiveness of management oversight, intervention and link to objectives	Principles D, F	Audit Manager, Policy and Performance Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updated reports focussing on outcomes and objectives</li> <li>• Greater oversight and support to achieve outcomes</li> </ul>
5	Asset Management review and associated actions planning and tracking	Principles C, E	Head of Legal Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of Asset Management Strategy action plan</li> </ul>
6	Consider new ways of working in a post-Covid 19 environment	Principle E	Strategic Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved efficiency and effectiveness</li> </ul>

Ref	Action	Link to Code & Framework	Co-ordinating Officer	How will success be measured?
7	Complete the refresh and rollout of the risk management framework (strategic level risks and operational)	Principles A, F, G	Audit Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic &amp; operational risk registers in place</li> <li>• Key risks escalated and reported</li> <li>• Risk themes are strategies monitored</li> </ul>
8	Improve resilience and community capacity to respond to additional peaks in demand	Principles E, F	Strategic Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resilience improved</li> </ul>
9	Carry out lessons learnt review of Covid -19 response	Principles D, E,G	Audit Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit Report and consideration of any recommendations</li> </ul>