

Chichester District Council

Draft - Annual Governance Statement 2017-2018

1. Scope of responsibility

Chichester District Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. Chichester District 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, Chichester District Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which include arrangements for the management of risk.

Chichester District Council approved and adopted a Local Code of Corporate Governance (March 2017), this is consistent with the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) framework for Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016). This Annual Governance Statement (AGS) sets out how the Council complied with the Code and also meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 which requires every Council to agree and publish an AGS. The statutory requirements across the United Kingdom for local authorities is to conduct a review at least once each financial year of the effectiveness of its system of internal control, and to include a statement reporting on this review with its Statement of Accounts.

2. The Purpose of the Governance Assurance Framework

The governance assurance framework comprises the systems, processes, culture and values by which the authority is directed and controlled, and the activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It also enables the authority to monitor the achievements of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate cost effective services.

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level; it cannot eliminate risk completely and therefore provides reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. It 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, to evaluate the likelihood and impact should they be realised and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

3. The Principles of Good Governance

The CIPFA/SOLACE framework was reviewed in 2015 to ensure that it remained “fit for purpose” and a revised edition was published in 2016.

The new Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework applies to the Annual Governance Statement prepared for the year ended 31 March 2018 and up to the date of the approval of the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for the financial year 2017-18. The framework sets out seven core principles (A to G) of good governance, these are listed below:

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

During 2017/2018 the Council has gone through a management restructure to take effect from the 1st April 2018. One Executive Director/Deputy Chief Executive and five Directors, previously Heads of Service, have been appointed and are supported by Divisional Managers.

The culture of the organisation is founded upon good organisational performance, external recognition, staff morale and good employee attitude to internal controls. The Workforce Development Plan 2015-2018 sets the Council’s vision for providing good quality relevant services to the community, and having the right skilled staff to deliver the services. The Constitution incorporates a Members’ and Employees’ Code of Conduct and a protocol on Members/staff relations. This has been updated and was adopted by the Council following the Joint Employee Consultative Panel which met in April 2015; this will cover the period 2015–2018. Members’ misconduct allegations are considered by an assessment sub-committee under the umbrella of the Standards Committee which also investigates allegations of misconduct by Parish Councillors. The Council’s Monitoring Officer will review the case together with an independent person and a decision will be made as to whether there is a case to answer. If a decision is made that there is a case to answer it would be referred to a hearing sub-committee.

There is a complaints procedure in place for the Council to receive and investigate any complaints made about service delivery and against its Members or staff, details of which are available on the Council’s website. There is also a Members’ Register of Interests to ensure that any conflict of interests are open and transparent.

Results of complaints investigated together with the report on all complaints dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman are reported annually to the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee. It is proposed to review the complaints procedure and to include a persistent complaints procedure and policy which has been suggested by the Ombudsman.

The Council takes fraud, corruption and maladministration very seriously. The culture of the Council sets the foundation for the prevention of fraud and corruption by creating an environment that is based upon openness and honesty in all council activities, and has the following policies in place, which aim to prevent or deal with such occurrences.

- The Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy last updated in August 2017.
- The Whistleblowing Policy last updated in January 2016. There were no Whistleblowing cases in 2017-18.

- HR Policies regarding discipline of staff – During 2016-17 there were 7 dismissals.

The Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy is in the process of being reviewed and updated to take account of the revised senior management structure. Any amendments are subject to the approval of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee. The Corporate Fraud Team has appointed a Corporate Counter Fraud Assistant to support the Corporate Counter Fraud Officer with the increased work primarily due to the level of Data Matches under the National Fraud Initiative.

Investigations are undertaken by the Corporate Counter Fraud Officer where fraud is suspected in relation to Council Tax Reduction, Single Person Discount and Non Domestic Rates plus other areas under his remit. He has identified potential savings to the Council of £327,882 for the 12 month period ending March 2018.

The Council ensures that external providers act with integrity and compliance with ethical standards as they have to comply with an Anti-Bribery statement and the Ethical Statement Policy that is contained in the relevant contract or invitation to tender.

During 2017/2018 the Council has been preparing for the introduction of GDPR in May 2018, which will impact on every element of the Council's work.

B Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

The Council's committee meetings are held in public and are recorded; these recordings are suspended when the item requires the meeting to go into Part 2. The press and public are only excluded when the report is presented as a Part 2 item in accordance with the applicable paragraph(s) within Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. In addition audio recordings are also held on the Council's website.

The Council's vision and strategy is included in the Corporate Plan see; <http://www.chichester.gov.uk/corporateplan>.

With the current Corporate Plan having an end date of 2018, a more extensive refresh was carried out in late 2017. The new Corporate Plan was approved by Council on 23 January 2018, to take effect from the 1st April 2018 and runs until the 31st March 2021.

The priorities set out in the new plan are largely unchanged from the previous version. They continue to represent the challenges and opportunities facing the District Council over the new plan period.

The annual performance report on the Council's Corporate Plan is reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee mid-year and then the Annual Report of the Corporate Plan goes to Cabinet and Council for approval. The Statement of Accounts, expenditure over £500 and the Senior Staff Pay Policy is available on the Council's website as part of the disclosures required under the transparency agenda.

On-line consultation methods continue to be used, webhost software enables surveys to be designed, produced and analysed electronically. These surveys are accessed via the Council's website.

On-line polls have continued to be used, which allows members of the public to provide their views on a range of topics in which the Council is involved. The Council's social

media accounts gives further opportunities for the public to comment informally on other issues.

Community Forums – Regular meetings with Parish Councils have continued throughout the year. These meetings are held quarterly and provide a mechanism to engage with the Parishes and to communicate and review information collectively.

The Council continues with its work on youth engagement. Community wardens main areas of activity are encouraging and increasing community involvement, dealing with environmental issues (e.g. graffiti, litter, abandoned cars, dog fouling etc.) within the area by working with appropriate agencies including the Police, Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and local communities to reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and fear of crime in the area, including providing intelligence and evidence to the Police and acting as a professional witness. With a reduction in the Police numbers in the City Centre the Community Wardens now provide a presence there.

C Defining the outcomes in terms of Sustainable Economic, Social and Environmental benefits

Although the Sustainable Community Strategy for Chichester District 2009-2026 is no longer a statutory document, the Council continues to be informed by the priorities identified in it. The document was last refreshed during 2016. These priorities are developed further through the Corporate Plan which sets out the Council's contribution to this partnership document. The Council measures its key priorities by a range of performance indicators which are set out within the Corporate Plan and monitored through Pentana, the Council's performance monitoring software. Reports on the progress of these performance indicators are available on the Council's website. In addition the Sustainable Community Strategy sets the vision for working in partnership with other local and national organisations supported by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) – Chichester in Partnership, including the publication of a consultation exercise undertaken with partners and stakeholders on behalf of the Local Strategic Partnership.

Cabinet agreed the key financial principles of the 5 year financial strategy, which included continuing to review the Council's costs in order to find further savings. A Task and Finish Group meets to discuss the budget, and reviews what is happening in the year and any impact for the new financial year.

The Council publishes its Annual Statement of Accounts in accordance with the CIPFA guidelines and International Financial Reporting Standards. As uncertainty continues to surround the current economic and financial climate and in particular public sector spending plans, it is clear that central funding cuts of local councils will continue. The Council is therefore committed to delivering its own services more effectively in the light of these planned reductions.

The Council continues to track national events, quantifying local impact and taking early action to manage the impact. The objective is to put the Council in the best possible position to deal with the financial and other challenges it faces whilst still protecting the most vulnerable members of the community. It is important that the issues and the scale of the financial position are understood and the Council is committed to finding solutions and options. A five year Financial Strategy and Plan was approved by Cabinet and Council in December 2016. The Plan details the challenges facing the Council to provide services that meet community needs with a significantly reduced overall level of resource. It is reviewed annually. The Council approved a deficit reduction programme and key financial

principles in the Financial Strategy which offers guidelines for making financial decisions over the next few years, and will assist the Council in achieving balanced budgets.

The Local Plan was adopted in July 2015, (this is at present being reviewed in accordance with the Council's commitment to a 5 year review) and provides greater certainty about growth and development within the plan area. It is now a new requirement that the Council produces a Brownfield Land Register which can be viewed on the Council's website. Following consultation the Council adopted a Masterplan for the Southern Gateway area of Chichester as part of the approved Vision for Chichester City Centre.

The Council is currently delivering the 2013-2018 Housing Strategy. However, a new strategy is being developed for 2019-2024. The strategy sets out the housing priorities for the district. The strategy reflects the Council's corporate priorities and also complements the Economic Strategy and the Local plan. The strategy will show how the Council will use their resources to best meet the housing needs of local people within the district.

Some of the key outcomes delivered and mentioned in the Annual Report during 2017/2018 are as follows:

- A welfare Officer and an additional Housing Advice Officer were employed to help the Council deal with the anticipated increase in the number of residents seeking advice and assistances as Universal Credit and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 will extend the Council's duties in respect of potentially homeless people.
- The multi-agency steering group for the Syrian Voluntary Person Relocation Scheme, housed and supported a further two Syrian families within the district.
- A further 38 properties were accredited through the Landlord Accreditation Scheme, bringing the total to 427.
- 8 households achieved assistance through the Chichester Warm Home initiative.
- The Council is now supporting 8 community led housing groups, a dedicated community led housing officer has been recruited and the first community led housing forum was held on the 23rd November 2017.
- 165 affordable homes were delivered (105 for rent and 60 for sale). This included 66 rural homes for local people and 1 new home to meet the needs of a household with a disabled person.
- 144 of these affordable homes were provided on market sites and 21 were enabled by the Council working with our registered provider partners.
- £630k of investment was secured by our registered provider partners from Homes England.
- The Council invested £735k from commuted sums received in lieu of affordable housing and a further three payments totalling £441k for commuted sums was also received in June 17 and March 18.
- The Council purchased an empty property to provide additional temporary accommodation for homeless households. The property currently provides four units of accommodation.

During 2018 there was a major change for Housing with the Homelessness Reduction Act which required more proactive work with potentially homeless people.

A new service for 2018/2019 will be 'Social Prescribing' which will be managed by the Wellbeing Team and will be funded by the District Council and partners.

In the Estates Services, Building Services and Economic Development 2017/2018 Annual Report some of the key outcomes delivered are as follows:

- Completion of the Enterprise Centre and handover to the selected operator, Basepoint.
- Progression of Barnfield Drive development in conjunction with the Council's developer partner, with Phase 1 now completed.
- Completion of the sale of the remaining land at Ellis Square.
- Acquisition of an investment property in central Chichester.
- Commencement of re-development of Plot 21, Terminus Road with business units.
- Completion of the cleaning and structural repairs to the Avenue de Chartres car park.
- The completion of the heating and cooling system at East Pallant House.
- Assisted 320 businesses on a diverse range of issues including funding, planning, start up and help finding suitable premises.
- £93,830 in grants have been awarded to 45 small and independent businesses to help with establishing new business start-ups.
- We have secured £168,800 from West Sussex Pooled Business Rate fund to provide a programme of specialist focussed retail training to support high street retailers in Chichester City and our rural towns.

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

The Council has responsibility to review the effectiveness of its governance framework. The review of the effectiveness is undertaken by the work of the Corporate Management Team (which is SLT and Divisional Managers) who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment. The Principal Auditor's annual report and comments made by the External Auditor also adds to the effectiveness of the governance framework at the Council. The process that has been applied in maintaining and reviewing the system of governance includes the following elements:-

The Council adopted a Constitution to ensure it is efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. Some of these processes are required by law; others are based on decisions made by the Council. It is the responsibility of the Council's Monitoring Officer to review the Constitution as and when required to ensure that it continues to operate effectively.

The Council is made up of 48 Members, four of these take up the roles of Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, Chairman and Deputy Chairman. The Leader and Deputy Leader plus five Cabinet Members are appointed with specific areas of responsibility. A review has been undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission to reduce the number of Councillors from 48 to 36. The review has now completed the 40 day period for Parliamentary scrutiny and it will come into force at the next Council Election in 2019.

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

During 2017/2018 services have been preparing for the management restructure and the new service areas. Some services made changes in December / January but the full effect

of the restructure took effect on the 1st April 2018 with new Directors and Divisional Managers being appointed.

A comprehensive induction and training programme exists for officers and Members. The training programme incorporates dealing with and understanding new and current legislation, understanding Members' role as a Ward Member and developing their personal skills. Training programmes for staff, are incorporated into staff appraisals and development programmes. Also training for the new Divisional Managers commenced in 2018.

A workforce development scheme has been introduced to support talented individuals in their career progression and to encourage the employment and development of apprentices. These initiatives are designed to encourage retention of staff and to address succession planning. From the 1st April 2017 the Council contributed to the Government Apprenticeship Levy and has sought to utilise this resource to support the workforce development schemes and development of its staff.

Members' attendance at meetings is recorded on the modern.gov system. In the event of continual non-attendance the matter would be passed to the leader of the political group concerned for action to be taken. Performance issues relating to staff are dealt with by Managers. An officer's employee specification includes competencies, which are assessed as part of their annual appraisal.

The Council's Constitution clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of the Chief Executive, Chief and Senior Officers, Members and Committees and outlines procedural standards, the scheme of delegation and a Protocol on Member/Officer relations. In light of the management restructure a review of the Constitution was undertaken under delegated powers by the monitoring officer. The Leader, Cabinet Members and the Committee Chairmen and deputies receive verbal briefings from the Senior Officers on a regular basis and all Members receive pre-council briefings and the opportunity to participate in workshops for high profile initiatives such as the Local Plan. Members receive monthly bulletins through the Council's intranet site, to keep them informed of any new developments.

The Director of Corporate Services (previously the Head of Finance & Governance) is the assigned Section 151 Officer; overall financial responsibilities for this role are detailed within the Constitution.

The Partnership Guidance to assist staff when setting up a partnership is in the process of being updated. Partnership training was been given to Members as part of their induction programme in 2014. Guidance has also been published on the intranet for officers. There are currently 10 strategic level partnerships that the Council is involved with.

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

All cabinet reports are authorised by the relevant Director and reviewed by the Chief Executive, the Director of Corporate Services (formerly Head of Finance and Governance/Section 151 Officer) and the Monitoring Officer, before they are presented to the Cabinet. The Monitoring Officer will also attend Cabinet if required to answer any specific questions raised by Members.

The Council's Risk Register is reviewed regularly and presented to the Strategic Risk Group bi-annually. The group comprises the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), 3 Members from Cabinet and 3 Members from the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee. Job descriptions of Senior Officers reflect their "Risk Management Responsibilities" and Internal Audit's Annual Audit Plan is drawn up using a risk-based approach, commenting on risk management in the area under review in their report. On a bi-annual basis the Council's Risk Registers including any new and emerging risks are presented to the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee. Since the last report to Committee in March 2018, the scores have remained unchanged for the previously identified existing strategic risks. However, three new strategic risks have been added to the risk register by SLT these are:

- Southern Gateway
- Local Plan
- Impact of Universal Credit (UC) on working claimants across the district.

Major projects incorporate a full risk assessment within the Project Initiation Document (PID) prior to being approved. The risk assessment is kept under regular review with the cabinet member concerned and via project team meetings as the project progresses.

The Health & Safety Manager has continued to work with services to ensure that there is an adequate business continuity plan in place. A decision was made to cease using Shadow Planner and to replace it with a system called Resilience Direct. This is a storage solution which is used to store key documents should the Council's system go down. Service functions are categorised as critical (systems up and running in 3 days) or non-critical (over 3 days). The Health & Safety Manager will continue to test the robustness of these plans.

The Council operates a shared service with Arun for the provision of its Emergency Planning service. The Emergency Planning Officer is shared between Arun and Chichester with two members of the Housing and Environment Service assisting.

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

The Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee has the power to make reports and recommendations to the Council's Executive Committee (Cabinet) on issues which affect the area. The Committee can require Members and Officers to attend meetings and for partner authorities to provide information. The Committee also reviews and scrutinises decisions made by the Council's Cabinet. The Council also takes part in county wide joint scrutiny reviews on issues affecting the wider area and has a representative on the West Sussex County Council Health and Social Care Select Committee to allow the authority to contribute to health related reviews. During 2018/2019 the Council will be working in partnership with GPs through the Local Community Networks to deliver a 2 year Social Prescribing pilot project. The Council will employ 4 Community Referrers who will work across all 11 GP practices in the district receiving referrals from GPs for people who present with issues that are not clinical and where the solution lies in a community based service.

In addition to the responsibilities outlined within the statement, the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee also had responsibilities for:

- Control and monitoring arrangements for risk.
- Review and determination of the Internal Audit priorities based on the governance issues and the risks assessments made.
- Review progress / effectiveness and probity of corporate governance within the authority.
- Report to full Council on significant issues or any concerns raised.
- Review and make recommendations to Cabinet and the Council on the Council's financial regulations and contract standing orders.
- Consider reports from the Director of Corporate Services on the Council's financial control system, the Council's insurance policies and self-insurance arrangements.
- Monitor the operation of the Members Allowance scheme; approve annually the final accounts of the Council and as required to monitor the efficiency of the Council's services.

The Corporate Governance & Audit Committee met five times during the year, however, from April 2018 this has been reduced to four meetings, to consider regular reports from Internal Audit on system reviews, reports from the Director of Corporate Services and Financial Services Divisional Manager in addition to Annual Audit and inspection letters from the nominated External Auditor (Ernst Young).

The Standards Committee is made up of seven District Members plus three co-opted (non-voting) Parish Members. There are two sub committees: the Assessment Sub-Committee and Hearing Sub-Committee, made up of three District Members of the Standards Committee. If a complaint is made against a Parish Councillor, one of the co-opted Parish Members also needs to attend in a purely advisory (non-voting) capacity. At each sub-committee one of the Chichester District Council's two independent persons will attend in a purely advisory (non-voting) capacity.

The overall responsibility of Internal Audit is to continually review the adequacy of the Council's internal controls and report where necessary, any recommendations to management. Internal Audit reviews are designed to assess the effectiveness of the internal controls on which the Council relies for managing risk. A report is prepared annually by Internal Audit on the effectiveness of the section and the opinion of the Principal Auditor is contained within the Annual Audit report. Internal Audit produces a three year plan which includes the resources of the section and the number of audits to be undertaken during each year.

From 2017 CDC publishes on their website and submits to government data relating to the gender pay gap in order to comply with the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017.

4. Effectiveness of Governance Arrangements

The Council's governance framework includes decision-making processes that are set out in the Council's Constitution; this is continually being reviewed together with the rules.

Procedures are in place for maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements throughout the year, these include the following:

- **Elected Members** – Make decisions in accordance with the Constitution and in accordance with the aims and objectives of the Council.

- **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** – Has the ability to scrutinise decisions made and maintains an overview of Council activities.
- **Standards Committee** – Meet to consider any complaints against Councillors and to review policies and procedures for maintaining high ethical standards.
- **Internal Audit Section** - Has a three year audit plan which is flexible and enables internal audit to respond to changing risks and priorities of the organisation.
- **Corporate Governance & Audit Committee** – Discuss the findings of audit reports and any other issues that relate to governance and risk management.
- **Corporate Management Team** – Review and update governance arrangements, identify and review new and emerging risks and review existing risks.
- **Strategic Risk Group** – Regularly reviews, updates and reports on the Risk Registers.
- **Internal Audit Annual Report & Opinion** – This will be presented to the Corporate Governance & Audit Committee on the 26th July 2018 in conjunction with this document which contains an assurance statement regarding internal control.
- **Legal & Democratic Services Manager (Monitoring Officer)** - Ensures that the Council's operations are carried out lawfully.

5. Significant Governance Issues

No significant issues reported in 2017/2018.

6. Risks Identified

Three new high risks that the Council identified during 2017-18 are detailed below:

Risk	Mitigating Action	Responsibility	Target date
<p>Southern Gateway</p>	<p>Partner Organisation Engagement relating to the Law Courts and the Homes and Communities Agency hand over, also close liaison with relevant Officers from WSCC Strategic Land Owner Engagement memorandum of understanding signed relating to land ownership and the relocation of Royal Mail and Stage Coach consultants are working to identify suitable sites Steering Group / Growth Board are to approve growth deal and on-going liaison with other partners. Financial Controls and Budget Monitoring, identifying potential abnormal costs as early as possible by undertaking key studies in advance e.g. flooding contamination and drainage. Relocation funding from key partners – Timely re-application to LEP/ HCA and exploring alternative funding routes as necessary. Management of External Consultants, Contract T&C's for consultants employed to ensure delivery of service. Availability of consultancy advice – Use tried and tested framework agreements to source expertise; test knowledge via tendering process. Masterplan, Demand market sector changes- Constant updating of viability advice for the Masterplan as the project implementation proceeds</p> <p>Road space configuration – WSCC Highways input to project team to ensure solutions(s) are acceptable. Community or Public Realm uses for site – Steering group input and regular re-appraisal of the Scheme as it progresses. Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO), Use of CPO if required for land</p>	<p>Executive Director & Deputy Chief Executive/ Director of Growth & Place/ Divisional Manager</p>	<p>Situation On-going</p>

Risk	Mitigating Action	Responsibility	Target date
Local Plan	<p>acquisitions for Masterplan assembly, where unable to agree terms to complete acquisitions. Use of consultancy support to ensure CPO grounds well founded, including independent valuations.</p> <p>Three new members have joined the team. A Planning Policy Officer has resigned and the post is being advertised along with a part-time Principal Officer post. Decisions about the likely distribution of development have now been made allowing the production of the evidence base to move forward. This is particularly important for the transport study which is progressing according to the project plan. However, given the likelihood of challenging mitigation to deal with the transport implications of development, this work probably represents the greatest risk to progress on the Local Plan Review.</p> <p>A number of evidence based studies are nearing completion, including the waste water treatment study. Work has begun on the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and the landscape work is in the process of being procured. The team has been given a steer on the approach to take the allocation of land for horticulture and employment uses. There has been a briefing for Parish Councils and this is being followed up with individual meetings with the parish councils. Member's briefings have or are taking place on the distribution of development and the results of the emerging evidence base.</p> <p>Members of the planning policy team are now drafting detailed policies, including the strategic site allocations, in preparation of the Preferred Approach Plan to be considered at Cabinet and Council in November. Members will also need to consider a revised Local</p>	Director of Planning & Environment / Planning Officer	31 st July 2020

Risk	Mitigating Action	Responsibility	Target date
	Development Scheme (which sets out the timetable for the production of the planning policy documents).		
Impact of Universal Credit (UC) on working claimants across the District	<p>Revenues & Benefits and Housing are taking steps to mitigate the effects and are planning to implement the following:</p> <p>Train key staff to enable them to give practical advice to advise residents</p> <p>Identify problem individuals or families early, either through HB (particularly DHP claimants and people struggling to make payments for HB overpayments or Council Tax) or through homelessness.</p> <p>Continue to network with stakeholders such as the CAB and Hyde.</p> <p>Develop the use of online systems, the Revenues department have recently introduced online benefit claim and council tax services.</p> <p>Facilitate training and work with stakeholders so that they are best able to assist residents.</p> <p>Work with organisations such as the CAB to enable them to train their staff and volunteers and develop their advice service across the district.</p>	<p>Director of Housing & Communities /</p> <p>Director of Residents Services /</p> <p>Divisional Manager – Housing /</p> <p>Divisional Manager – Revenues & Benefits</p>	July 2018

The process of preparing the Annual Governance Statement has in itself added value to the Corporate Governance and Internal Control framework of the Council.

7. Certification

It is therefore our opinion that Corporate Governance, along with supporting controls and procedures, remains very strong within the Council.

T Dignum
Leader of the Council

D Shepherd
Chief Executive