

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2019/20

1. SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

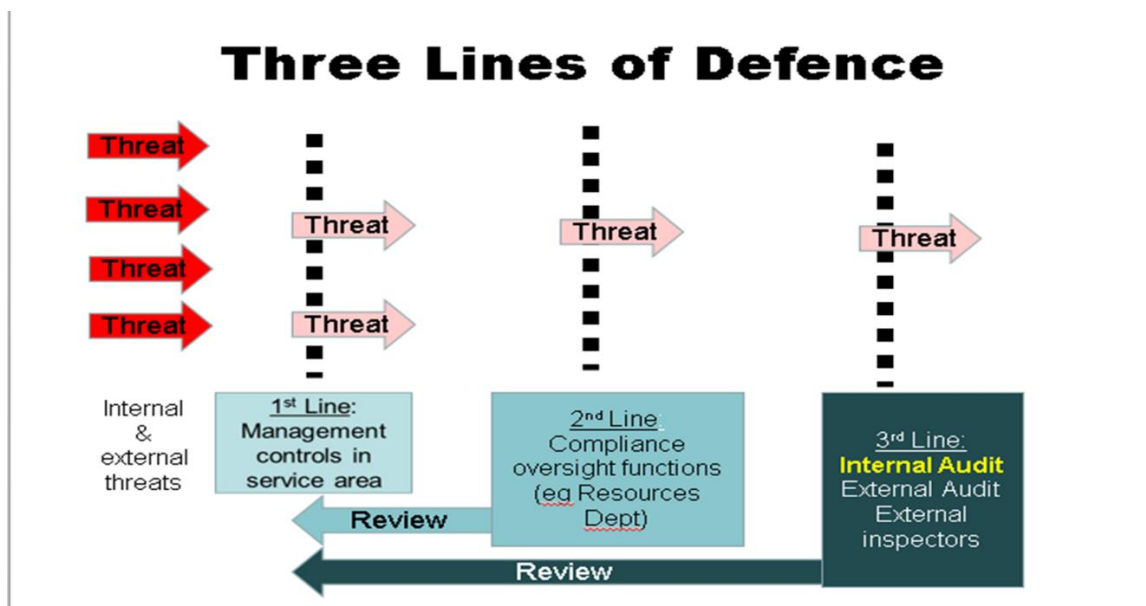
- 1.1. Nottinghamshire County Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards. Public money must be safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Authority has a duty under the Local Government 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. The Localism Act 2011 has, among other things, established a general power of competence for local authorities.
- 1.2. In discharging this overall responsibility, the County Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, including the arrangements for the management of risk.
- 1.3. This statement meets the requirements of regulation 4 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations (England) 2011 in relation to the publication of an Annual Governance Statement (AGS).

2. THE LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

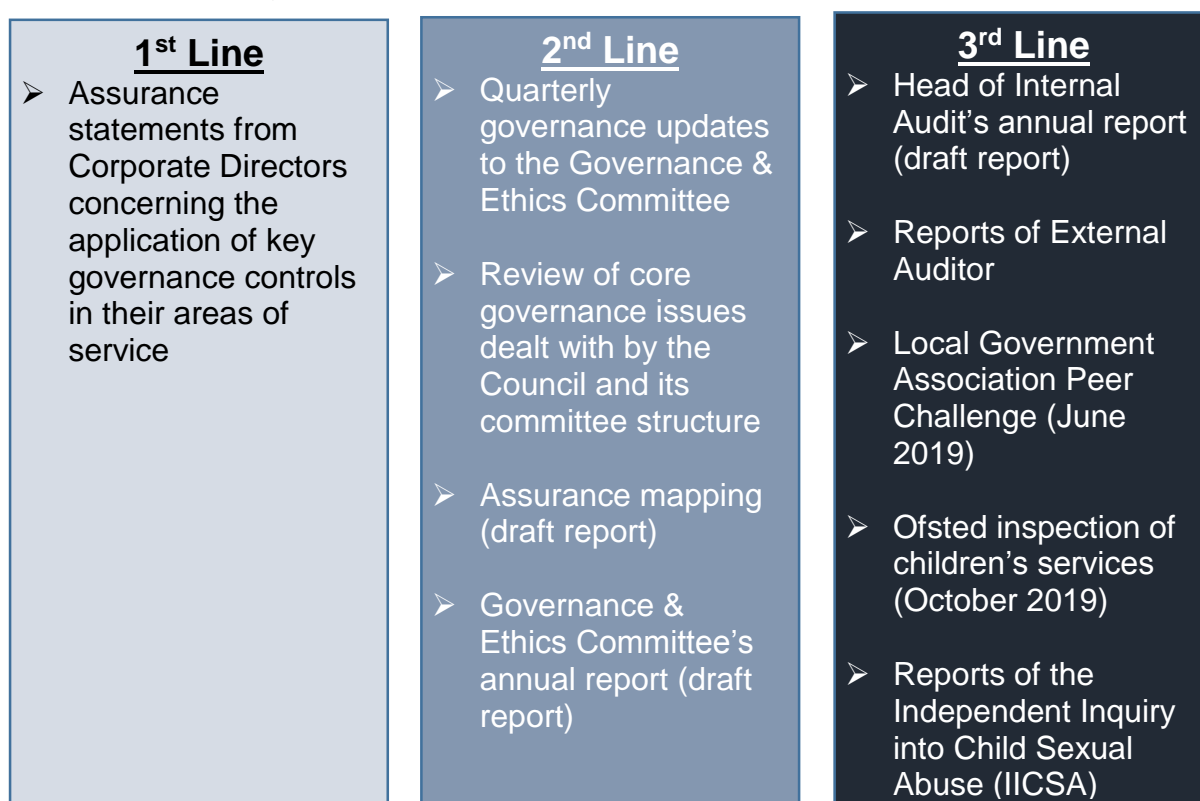
- 2.1. Nottinghamshire County Council has adopted a local Code of Corporate Governance. This Code is subject to annual review and approval by the Governance and Ethics Committee, and it is published on the Council's website.
- 2.2. The Code is based on the seven core principles of good governance, as recommended in the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework for 'Delivering good governance in Local Government' (2016 Edition).

3. REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS

- 3.1. The Authority has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework. This Statement sets out the outcome of the latest review for the financial year 2019/20. The outcomes are set out in terms of the extent to which the Council has applied in practice the seven core principles of good governance.
- 3.2. The Council operates a 'Three Lines of Defence' model to deliver assurance about the effectiveness of its governance arrangements, as depicted in the following chart.



- 3.3. The evidence to assess effectiveness with the Local Code in 2019/20 is drawn from a range of sources across the three lines of defence, as summarised in the following chart.



- 3.4. The quarterly governance update reports to the Corporate Leadership Team and to the Governance & Ethics Committee prompt a review of the significant governance issues facing the Council, along with progress against the AGS Action Plan. In effect, the update reports provide for a quarterly refresh of the AGS, to enable it to be used pro-actively throughout the year as part of the Council's governance framework.

- 3.5. Where any issues of concern are highlighted by the review, these issues are noted below in section 4 of the Statement, along with the key actions planned to address them.

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the AGS

- 3.6. This AGS assesses governance in place during 2019/20, so the majority of the year was unaffected by coronavirus. However, coronavirus impacted on governance during March 2020, and the Council needs to ensure that the AGS is current at the time of publication. This has been delayed due to the pandemic, therefore this statement reflects issues the Council is dealing with in responding to, and recovering from, the pandemic.
- 3.7. It has not been possible to report the usual separate, annual assurance reports to the Governance and Ethics Committee for consideration and approval. As indicated in the chart above, the evidence required in drafting these reports has been gathered and used to inform this statement. The annual assurance reports will be finalised and reported for approval at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.8. It is also recognised that the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has required a widespread refocusing of the Council's operating model and its supporting governance arrangements. The response to the pandemic represented a significant resilience test for the Council's governance framework. Once the emergency response period is over, it will be important to conduct a comprehensive post-pandemic review, to ensure learning is captured and applied. An internal audit review of the Council's response is underway and should provide initial insights toward this.
- 3.9. The Council has set up a Resilience, Recovery and Renewal Committee to oversee the county's recovery from the coronavirus outbreak. The new committee will review the Council's response to the COVID-19 crisis and manage policy development relating to the county's recovery, including the Council's approach to the renewal of the local economy and reform of local government services, including the future structure of local government in Nottinghamshire.
- 3.10. The lasting impact of the pandemic on the Council is unclear at the time of compiling this statement, but it will be profound. In view of this, the quarterly refresh of this statement in the coming year will prove especially beneficial, and should also prompt consideration of the need to update the Local Code of Corporate Governance.

| Core Principle | Review of compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance in 2019/20 |
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| A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law | <p>Assessed assurance level for compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance: Reasonable</p> <p>The key policies, procedures and practices set out in the Local Code of Corporate Governance remained in force during 2019/20.</p> <p>Corporate Directors report, overall, a substantial level of compliance with the Council's procedures in their service areas.</p> <p>A review of the Council's Constitution continued to progress during the year, with proposals for revised Full Council Procedure Rules and Committee Procedure Rules being considered by the Governance and Ethics Committee and a member working group being established to finalise the proposed changes. These were approved by Full Council in December 2019. The work to review other aspects of the Constitution will progress further in 2020/21, as soon as post-pandemic priorities allow.</p> <p>Progress against the AGS action plan for this aspect of governance is summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving the consistency with which Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) are carried out across the Council – following a review during 2019/20, a programme of management training, comprising a blend of workshops and online e-learning, was due to commence roll-out towards the end of the year and into 2020/21. Work is being commissioned through Corporate Equalities Group, working with the self-managed staff support groups, to review and progress this particularly in the light of issues such Black Lives Matter. - The Council's Legal Services Team is progressing a review of the corporate arrangements for officers to register interests, gifts and hospitality. - An objection to the 2015/16 financial accounts was raised by a member of the public. The matter was investigated by the Ombudsman, the Police and by the External Auditor. The latter's report was finalised during the year and an action plan to address the recommendations raised was approved by the Governance and Ethics Committee in March 2020. <p>Member training has been provided throughout the year and this is an area which is under review through the Member Communication and Engagement programme. An action plan is in place to pursue opportunities to expand the current provisions. A report will be brought to Members in the early Autumn with further recommendations, including Unconscious Bias training.</p> |
| B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement | <p>Assessed assurance level for compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance: Substantial</p> <p>The Council's strategic plan, 'Your Nottinghamshire, Your Future', was published to run from 2017 through to 2021. The Council complied with the requirements of the Transparency Code in 2019/20.</p> <p>The Council's Planning and Performance Management Framework was refreshed during the year, and the format of reporting progress against the Council Plan was revised with the aim of bringing improved focus for Members and the public.</p> <p>The LGA Peer Challenge confirmed that the Council delivers good quality, citizen-focused services, and that it is viewed by its strategic partners as a dependable, reliable and solid organisation. The Peer Challenge identified opportunities for the Council to work closely with its strategic partners to develop a vision for the whole of</p> |

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| | <p>Nottinghamshire. This recommendation will be taken forward by the Council's newly established Resilience, Recovery and Renewal Committee.</p> <p>The Council continued to fully support the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), publishing its action plan to implement the Inquiry's one recommendation for the County Council. Progress against the Plan is being monitored by the Children and Young People's Committee, and the Committee will receive further recommendations from a cross-party working group of Members and officers on the governance of Looked After Children care settings.</p> <p>The Ofsted inspection of children's services rated the overall effectiveness of the service as 'Good', confirming the Council has maintained its good practice since the previous inspection in 2015. Within this overall judgement, services for children who need help and protection were identified as requiring improvement. This confirmed the Council's self-assessment that discrete aspects of the service require improvement, and it endorsed the Council's action plan to put the changes in place.</p> <p>Corporate Directors report, overall, a substantial level of assurance over the arrangements for stakeholder engagement with their services.</p> <p>The Communications Policy and Social Media Policy remained in place during the year, securing stakeholder engagement through a range of pathways. A cross-Council programme has been established as part of Phase II of the Council Plan, 'Your Nottinghamshire, Your Future 2019-2021', to improve customer experiences through digital development. This is addressing the LGA Peer Challenge recommendation that the Council explores new and creative ways of engaging with residents.</p> <p>The annual Residents' Survey was completed in December 2019 with an overall positive result which was reported back to Policy Committee. The Council continues to operate its Citizen's Panel to consult with panel members about County Council services.</p> |
| C. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits | <p>Assessed assurance level for compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance: Substantial</p> <p>The key Council policies, strategies and reporting regimes identified in the Local Code of Corporate Governance remained in place during 2019/20 and were further developed in some areas.</p> <p>Agreed changes to the Council's Planning and Performance Management Framework were implemented in 2019/20. These changes improved the clarity of progress reporting against the Council Plan, and better defined how the objectives of the over-arching Plan link with other, key Council strategies.</p> <p>The Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) continued to be a key focus to drive sustainable development in the Council. Progress with implementing options for change approved by the relevant service committees was monitored quarterly by the Improvement and Change Sub-Committee throughout the year. The LGA Peer Challenge considered the Council to be financially stable.</p> <p>At the time of compiling this Statement, the Council had established a new Committee, the COVID-19 Resilience, Recovery and Renewal Committee, along with</p> |

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| | <p>agreed Terms of Reference for its areas of responsibility. The Committee will play a key role in overseeing the Council's approach to this aspect of governance as it focusses on recovery and renewal.</p> <p>A Finance Recovery Group has been established to assess and capture the significant, financial impact of the pandemic. The MTFS is kept under constant review. This will continue as a key driver for the Council's transformation and change agenda, to maintain sustainability over the coming years.</p> <p>Separately to this, the Council is monitoring and reporting the financial impacts of the pandemic on a monthly basis to CLT, Members and the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG).</p> <p>For health and safety reasons, meetings of the Finance & Major Contracts Management Committee (F&MCM) have not been held since the outbreak of the pandemic. However, a meeting has now been scheduled with a focus on the Council's emerging financial position prior to the summer recess.</p> <p>Interim reporting to Members of the Council's developing financial position has been maintained by a number of means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharing the usual format of financial reporting with F&MCM Committee Members each month - Fortnightly meetings between the Chief Finance Officer and the Chairman and two Vice-Chairs of the F&MCM Committee, as well as fortnightly meetings between the Chief Financial Officer and Opposition Members of the Committee - Production and sharing of the draft management accounts with the F&MCM Committee Members. |
| D. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes | <p>Assessed assurance level for compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance: Substantial</p> <p>The Council strategy, 'Your Nottinghamshire, Your Future', is supported by the departmental strategies. These strategies were refreshed and approved by Policy Committee in May 2019 and progress against them was monitored by the appropriate service committees.</p> <p>As set out above, the Improvement and Change Sub-Committee oversaw progress against the Council's Transformation and Change Programme. In determining the projects proposed for inclusion in the Programme, Corporate Directors report, overall, substantial assurance that change proposals are informed by the input of stakeholders.</p> <p>The LGA Peer Challenge highlighted the Council's strong and impressive track-record of delivering savings whilst also protecting frontline services, over a long period of time. Nonetheless, LGA Peers encouraged the Council to stretch its transformation ambitions further, to embrace a culture-led and cross-departmental approach.</p> <p>In response, the Council engaged the services of an external partner during 2019/20, to input specialist expertise in redefining the Authority's approach to transformation and change. A two-phase process is being followed; a diagnostic approach in the first</p> |

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| | <p>phase, with the second phase setting out the key themes and transformation journey for the medium-term. Phase 1 was nearing completion at the end of the year, and this is being re-evaluated for the post-COVID19 period.</p> <p>The AGS Action Plan for 2019/20 contained a number of actions relating to this aspect of governance. Progress against the action plan was monitored quarterly by the Governance and Ethics Committee. At the end of the year, some actions remained in progress, partly due to the impact of COVID19. In carrying forward actions for completion in 2020/21, the nature and timing of some actions will need to be re-evaluated for the impact of COVID19. See action plan.</p> |
| E. Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it | <p>Assessed assurance level for compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance: Substantial</p> <p>A refreshed Workforce Strategy for the Council was agreed during the year, to run to 2021. This is now being reviewed to reflect the impact of and learning from COVID-19 and a Workforce Recovery Plan is being developed.</p> <p>Positive levels of assurance were received from Corporate Directors regarding arrangements for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ inducing new members of staff ➤ conducting regular employee appraisals. ➤ regular reviews of activities, outputs and planned outcomes to identify areas for improvement ➤ appropriate use of research and benchmarking to inform priorities for service development ➤ appropriate use of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved. <p>During the COVID-19 Pandemic some of these will have been delivered differently. For example, induction programmes for new staff employed to respond to the pandemic were delivered virtually. Approximately 7,000 modules of e-learning were delivered to new employees and as refresher training to existing employees working in front line services during the pandemic.</p> <p>With regard to Members of the Council, there was no requirement to apply the induction programme during 2019/20, as no new Members joined the Council during the year. This programme is being reviewed in preparation for the next Council elections in 2021. Specific areas of training delivered for Members during 2019/20 covered standards and personal safety.</p> <p>A Member Communication and Engagement Programme was launched in July 2019, incorporating a workstream for Members' training and development. This will provide for a rolling programme of development for all Members.</p> <p>The impact of the pandemic on the Council's Members and staff has been significant, posing a severe test of its leadership and of its capacity to maintain delivery of critical service. Council staff are playing a full and active role in the response to the pandemic with its Local Resilience Forum (LRF) partners, and its Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and Risk, Safety and Emergency Management Board (RSEMB) have managed the Council's own response. Data dashboards have been developed to give CLT a clear view of daily capacity in critical services, allowing it to take informed decisions.</p> |

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| | <p>Through the leadership of these senior officer groups, and with the support and guidance of senior Members and the Policy Committee, the Council's response was successfully refocussed around five programmes of work, prioritising: support for vulnerable adults; support for vulnerable children and families (including schools); community support and resilience; support for business and the local economy; and corporate resilience.</p> <p>The new ways of working made necessary by COVID-19 resulted in a number of pressures on the Council's ICT systems. The implementation of new applications was accelerated, to allow most staff to work remotely. This caused connectivity issues for some users, and actions were taken to improve resilience. As we progress through 2020/21, it will be important to build on these improved ICT resilience and digital developments.</p> |
| F. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management | <p>Assessed assurance level for compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance: Reasonable</p> <p>The key policies, procedures and practices set out in the Local Code of Corporate Governance remained in force during 2019/20.</p> <p>The Governance and Ethics Committee plays a pivotal role in overseeing the effectiveness of the Council's arrangements for governance, risk management and control. The Committee prepares an annual report of its activities, and its report for 2019/20 was being drafted just prior to the COVID19 pandemic outbreak. The draft report confirms that the Committee made appropriate use of the full range of powers delegated to it under the terms of the Constitution. The draft will be finalised for approval by Members at the earliest opportunity in 2020/21.</p> <p>The Council's Risk Safety and Emergency Management Board (RSEMB), and its supporting, departmental Risk Safety & Emergency Management Groups (RSEMGs) were active throughout 2019/20, and especially so at the turn of the year as they oversaw and managed the COVID19 response. Responsibility for risk management is due to transfer to the Authority's Assurance Group in 2020/21, to further co-ordinate with other governance processes of the Council. In doing this, the Council's approach to risk management will be refreshed, and this will include proposals for establishing and applying the Council's risk appetite.</p> <p>The usual procedure for the Council's Head of Internal Audit to report his annual opinion to the Governance and Ethics Committee was disrupted by the impact of the COVID19 pandemic. However, the service operates a continuous four-monthly planning cycle, therefore two reports on the outcomes of Internal Audit's work were considered by the Committee in 2019/20. These reports, and the outcomes of audit work carried out in the final third of 2019/20 have informed the Head of Internal Audit's Annual Opinion. This will be reported in full to the Governance and Ethics Committee at the earliest opportunity, and its key messages are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overall, the Head of Internal Audit provides 'Reasonable Assurance' that the Council's arrangements for governance, risk management and control are effective. - An important issue flagged up by the Head of Internal Audit concerns the pace with which agreed audit recommendations are implemented in some key areas of service. The Governance and Ethics Committee continues to play an active role in holding services to account for the progress they are making. |

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| | <p>The Council's assurance mapping process continued to develop in 2019/20, with two new aspects of governance being incorporated: asset management and people management. These two new areas were still being collated at the time of the pandemic outbreak, but the update of the other three areas (risk, performance, finance) had been largely completed. Reporting of outcomes to the Governance and Ethics Committee for 2019/20 has yet to take place. The scope of the assurance map will be reviewed again, to reflect the impact of COVID19.</p> <p>External assurance was received from HM Revenue & Customs that Nottinghamshire County Council has been designated a 'low risk rating', following a business risk review of its tax arrangements.</p> <p>The Council's counter-fraud and counter-corruption strategy was refreshed during 2019/20 and updates presented regularly to the Governance and Ethics Committee. Whilst the incidence of fraud remains low, the Council recognises the significant threat level that fraud poses, and it remains pro-active in its stance against it. An ongoing process has been established to keep the threat from serious and organised scrutiny, and this enabled the issue to be downgraded as a significant governance issue for the Council.</p> <p>Good progress is being made against the Information Governance Action Plan, which the Governance and Ethics Committee has kept under quarterly review. Corporate Directors' annual assurance statement identify reasonable assurance, overall, in this area.</p> |
| G. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability | <p>Assessed assurance level for compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance: Reasonable</p> <p>The evidence collected from the sources of assurance set out above at 3.2 confirmed that the key policies, procedures and practices identified in the Local Code of Corporate Governance remained in force during 2019/20.</p> <p>The LGA Peer Challenge supported the Council's current review of its Constitution, recognising the opportunity to streamline, standardise and further enhance clarity, openness and transparency of decision-making. The LGA Peers recommended a focus on improving the consistency and pace with which decisions are made.</p> <p>Due to the impact of COVID-19, it has not been possible to publish a number of annual governance reports. Review work to assess the required evidence for these reports has been undertaken and used to inform this Statement. The reports concerned are the following, and all will be reported to Committee as soon as the pandemic restrictions are lifted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual assurance mapping report - Head of Internal Audit's Annual Report - Annual Report to Council of the work of the Governance & Ethics Committee in 2019/20. <p>When tabled, the Head of Internal Audit's Annual Report will confirm the Internal Audit service remained compliant with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards in 2019/20, and it has updated its Quality Assurance and Improvement Plan for 2020/21. The service's direct lines of access to all senior Members and officers continued during 2019/20, and it conducted its duties without encumbrance.</p> |

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| | <p>The Council's former External Auditor completed its report on a long-standing objection to the annual accounts for 2016/17. The issue related to a sale of land, and the External Auditor's report and recommendations were accepted by the Governance and Ethics Committee.</p> <p>The Council's complaints procedure was revised in early 2020 and approved by the Governance and Ethics Committee. The Committee continued its transparent practice of considering the latest decisions of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman as a standing agenda item for each of its meetings.</p> <p>The impact of COVID-19 on the Council's well-established governance framework has been significant, with all Committees cancelled as actual meetings for health and safety reasons. A cross-group, political agreement was in place from March about how to manage decision making and governance in the face of the pandemic. Once legislation was in place to allow this and government guidance received, arrangements were made to conduct the work of Committees through virtual meetings with a number having taken place. An Extraordinary Full Council meeting was held virtually on 11th June 2020 which established the Council's Committee structure and governance arrangements for the next year until the Annual General Meeting in May 2021. A further virtual meeting of Full Council is planned for July 2020.</p> <p>Existing provisions under the Council's Constitution for broad delegations to Corporate Directors have been utilised to carry out service-related, operational decisions. These are widened further during times of emergency, to exercise the powers of the County Council. Emergency decisions and any decisions made under the Urgency Procedures set out in the Council's Constitution were taken after discussion with Group Leaders and reported back to the next, appropriate Committee or Council meeting. A summary was reported to Policy Committee.</p> |

4. SIGNIFICANT GOVERNANCE ISSUES

- 4.1. **The transformation agenda:** the Council's transformation agenda was undergoing significant review during 2019/20, working alongside its external partner to develop a new, intelligence and insight-led model of transformation. The importance and urgency of this work has been compounded by the impact of the pandemic on the County's residents and businesses, alongside the impact on the Council's finances. The scope and focus for Transformation and Change is being reshaped around the Council's emerging resilience, recovery and renewal objectives.
- 4.2. **Financial resilience:** The COVID-19 pandemic has placed significant, unforeseen and additional financial burdens on the Council. The importance of effective management of the most volatile elements of the annual budget is now heightened and remains a key area of focus. Concern lies around processes for budget setting, forecasting and the effective use of data. The newly established Financial Recovery Group will play a lead role shaping the Council's response to any gap in Government funding for the impact of the pandemic. Maintaining the flow of transparent, financial data for Councillors will be a key priority.
- 4.3. **Fair Funding & Business Rates Retention:** Progress has been delayed again due to the pandemic. The Council will continue to campaign for the promised Fair Funding Review to occur.
- 4.4. **Pressure on core systems of internal control:** The findings of Internal Audit over recent Termly Audit Plans are not identifying a concerning number of areas in which only limited assurance can be provided over the effectiveness of internal controls. However, the Group Manager – Assurance has reported to the Governance & Ethics Committee a decline in implementation rates for agreed actions following audits. Understanding the impact of the pandemic on the internal control framework in the Council will be key to achieving an appropriate balance between probity and speed of response.
- 4.5. **Vulnerability to fraud:** An update on progress against the Annual Fraud Report's action plan was presented to the Governance & Ethics Committee in December 2019. The incidence of internal fraud remains low, but the Council continues to be the target of attacks from external sources, notably in relation to its suppliers' bank details. The Council is also alert to the opportunities that fraudsters seek to exploit from the pandemic situation.
- 4.6. **Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA):** A comprehensive action plan was agreed by the Children & Young People's Committee in December 2019, and that Committee will perform ongoing scrutiny and monitoring at appropriate intervals. A second phase of public hearings took place in November 2019 for the Accountability & Reparations investigation, and an additional, special sitting-day was scheduled for 5 February 2020. The Council will consider that investigation's findings and recommendations when released, and incorporate further actions in to the Council's response.

- 4.7. **Controversial/sensitive decisions:** The risk of challenge and demonstrations at Council meetings, at which potentially controversial and sensitive decisions are to be taken, is recognised. As the Administration Body for the Nottinghamshire Local Government Pension Scheme, the Council continues to be a focus of attention by the Nottingham Extinction Rebellion group on its stance on investments. The Council's stance and approach on this issue remains under active management.
- 4.8. **General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR):** The Information Governance Improvement Programme continues to help the Council manage the significant reputational and financial risks of breaches in data protection. Close monitoring of progress against the improvement plan is continuing to mitigate any risks. A separate risk assessment is underway as part of the recovery from COVID-19 to review decisions and activity during the response phase to identify any learning from an information governance perspective and ensure any necessary mitigations are put in place going forward.
- 4.9. **Move to the Cloud and ICT resilience:** The County Council currently stores its software and data within the ICT Data Centre on the County Hall campus. Work continues to provide these services using a 'cloud' based online approach, as part of the plans to use the latest technology to provide more cost-effective ICT Services. The most appropriate ICT systems and applications remain under review, both in light of the response to the pandemic and with a view to the Council's emerging plans for recovery and renewal.
- 4.10. **Brexit implications for the Council:** With ratification of the Withdrawal Agreement, the UK left the EU with a deal on 31 January 2020. The Government has now moved into a transition / implementation period in which it is negotiating its future relationship with the European Union. The Government's position is that it is expected to have a trade and other relevant agreements in place by December 2020. Further contingency planning work may be required to mitigate the risk that trade negotiations will not be completed in this timescale.
- 4.11. **Local Government Association Peer Challenge:** The LGA Peer Challenge was conducted in June 2019 and its subsequent report recognised a number of the Council's key attributes that underpin the positive findings of the Review Team. A report to Policy Committee in October 2019 agreed an action plan in response to the report's five recommendations. Progress is being monitored by the appropriate committee for each action.
- 4.12. **Ofsted inspection of Children's Services:** The inspection endorsed the actions set in train to deliver improvements in discrete aspects of the service, and the Children & Young People's Committee will oversee implementation.
- 4.13. **Return of Committee schedule:** A local, cross-group, political agreement was reached about how to manage the council's decision making and governance in the face of the pandemic. The Constitution's emergency and urgency provisions for decision-making enabled governance of the Council's response to the pandemic to continue in the early stages of the crisis. These decisions

have been reported to Members. The Council has now seen a return to its Committee and Full Council schedule in a safe and secure manner, with a number of meetings having been held virtually. This included an Extraordinary Full Council meeting on 11th June which agreed the Committee structure and decision-making processes for the year ahead.

5. Action Plan 2020/21

| Planned action | Officer responsible | Target date for completion |
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| 1. Progress reporting against key governance action plans: compliance with agreed progress reporting against key action plans for significant aspects of the governance framework: a) LGA Peer Challenge b) IICSA c) Ofsted inspection of Children's services d) Counter-fraud e) Information Governance Improvement Programme | Group Manager Assurance to monitor and report compliance with agreed progress reporting | Continuous in 2020/21 |
| 2. Post-pandemic review: formally review the Council's response to capture and apply learning for the future. This will build on two reports to date to Policy Committee on the impact of COVOD-19. | Chief Executive | |
| 3. Return of Committee schedule: ensure the Committee and Full Council schedule is fully re-established and working safely and effectively. | Monitoring Officer | |
| 4. Local Code of Corporate Governance: review the Local Code to ensure it remains up-to-date with the Council's revised governance practices and arrangements to support ongoing recovery and renewal from the pandemic | Group manage Assurance | March 2021 |
| 5. Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) – review the approach with key stakeholders and deliver refresher training workshops for completion of EIAs, along with an online e-learning package. | Monitoring Officer | |
| 6. Constitution review: completion of the review of the Constitution, incorporating financial regulations for property transactions | Group Manager – Legal, Democratic & Complaints | |
| 7. Register of Interests – completion of the current review by Legal Services, followed by approval of proposed changes and awareness raising. | Group Manager – Legal, Democratic & Complaints | |
| 8. CIPFA Financial Management Code – shadow implementation during 2020/21, with periodic progress updates to the Governance & Ethics Committee | Group Manager – Finance Strategy & Compliance | The code is applicable from 1/4/2020, with the planned first full year of |

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| | | compliance being 2021/22 |
| 9. Planning & Performance Management Framework: implement co-ordinated reporting of finance, performance and transformation to the Corporate Leadership Team | Group Manager - Assurance | September 2020 |
| 10. Service Planning: review the content and timescales for 2020/21 service plans, to support the Council's COVID-19 recovery and renewal plans | Group Manager – Assurance to co-ordinate revised timescales and quality assurance checks | September 2020 |
| 11. Performance reporting in specific departments: revised arrangements for monthly performance board reporting in the Place and Chief Executive's Departments, incorporating the introduction of continuous assurance feeds for key corporate processes | Group Manager – Assurance | October 2020 |
| 12. Benchmarking: co-ordinate CIPFA benchmarking reports and consider its use within the performance management framework, along with other benchmarking tools (eg CFO Insights) | Group Manager – Assurance | December 2020 |
| 13. Audit of performance management: carry out an internal audit review of service planning | Group Manager – Assurance to arrange for completion of an independent review | October 2020 |
| 14. Transformation Operating Model: agree and implement a revised operating model for transformation in the Council | Corporate Leadership Team | July 2020 - approval of new model |
| 15. Transformation best practice: carry out the National Audit Office self-assessment guidance for best practice in Member scrutiny of transformation | Group Manager Assurance and Group Manager Transformation & Change to prepare a joint report to the Improvement & Change Sub-Committee | November 2020 |
| 16. Social care fraud risk: Continue to monitor implementation of the agreed actions from the internal audit review of the Council's response to social care fraud. | Group Manager – Assurance and Service Directors/Group managers with responsibility for social care services | Periodic updates to the Governance & Ethics Committee through Internal Audit's follow-up procedure |
| 17. Risk management: a) Complete the transfer of responsibility for corporate risk management to the Assurance Group | Group Manager – Assurance | a) June 2020 |

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| b) Undertake a review of the Council's approach to risk management, including development of an approach to establishing the Council's risk appetite c) Deliver a training session on risk management for the Governance & Ethics Committee | | b) October 2020 c) March 2021 |
| 18. Vacant property management: further progress report to Governance & Ethics Committee on actions to address the risks identified by the internal audit | Corporate Director - Place | |
| 19. Data quality in Mosaic: greater priority given to addressing issues highlighted by routine reporting | Corporate Director – Adults Social Care and Health | To commence in the 3 rd quarter of 2019/20 |
| 20. Pension Fund Committee: active management of the Committee's meetings | Service Director – Finance, Infrastructure & Improvement | Ongoing in 2020/21 |
| 21. IICSA Accountability & Reparations: update the Council's response for the findings and recommendations of IICSA in its Accountability & Reparations Report | Corporate Director Children's & Families & Service Director Finance, Infrastructure & Improvement | To be determined following publication of the IICSA report |
| 22. ICT resilience: keep the resilience of ICT provision, and development of digital working solutions, under frequent review to remain aligned with the Council's operating environment during recovery from the pandemic. | Group Manager - ICT | As part of established reporting to the Improvement & Change Sub-Committee |
| 23. Fair Funding & Business Rates Retention: continue to be active in campaigning for the Fair Funding Review to take place. | Service Director – Finance, Infrastructure & Improvement | Ongoing pending an announcement from Government |

APPROVAL OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Council has adopted a robust approach to addressing these financial, demographic, technological and legislative challenges.

The Governance and Ethics Committee reviewed the local code of corporate governance and this statement at their meeting on 1 May 2019. We are aware of the steps that are being and will be taken to address the above significant governance issues and we are satisfied that these are appropriate. We will monitor their implementation during the course of 2019/20 and beyond.

Signed:.....

LEADER

Signed:.....

CHIEF EXECUTIVE