

Conwy County Borough Council
Annual Governance Statement
2019/2020

1 Introduction

Conwy County Borough Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. It also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 and Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

The Council has a **Local Code of Corporate Governance** which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework Delivering Good Governance in Local Government and a **Governance Framework** which comprises the policies, procedures, behaviours and values by which the Council is controlled and governed. This statement is an evaluation of compliance with the Local Code and whether governance arrangements effectively support the delivery of Corporate Objectives. The Statement also meets the requirements of Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014, which requires all relevant bodies to prepare an annual governance statement.

2 What is Governance?

Corporate governance is the system by which an organisation is directed and controlled.

A good governance structure will include as a minimum:

- Clear governance standards by which an organisation will be governed
- Governance roles and responsibilities
- A mechanism for measuring an organisation's performance against its governance standards.

To be successful an organisation must have a solid foundation of good governance and sound financial management.

3 Corporate Governance Arrangements

Conwy County Borough Council is committed to ensuring good governance principles and management practices are adopted in all business activities to ensure public trust.

1) The Local Code of Governance

The Local Code of Governance provides a public statement that sets out the way in which the Council meets and demonstrates compliance with the CIPFA Governance principles.

2) The Governance Framework

The Local Code is underpinned by a Governance Framework which comprises the policies, procedures, behaviours and values by which the Council is controlled and governed.

3) The Annual Governance Statement

The Annual Governance Statement provides assurances over the Council's Governance arrangements, together with identifying areas of future focus and improvement. The purpose of the Annual Governance Statement is to report publicly on the extent to which the Council complies with its local code of governance. It identifies those areas which have been identified as needing improvement following self-assessment.

4) Annual Governance Statement Action Plan

The Council continues to review the self-assessment areas of improvement and they are monitored through the AGS Action plan

4 Sources of assurance for this evaluation:

Assurance Required Upon	Sources of Assurance	Assurances Received
Delivery of Corporate Plan priorities	Corporate and Service plans	Annual Report Audit Wales Certificate of compliance
Services are delivered economically, efficiently & effectively	Service Performance Reviews Strategic Equalities Strategy	Corporate Performance Report Strategic Equality Annual Report Scrutiny Annual Review
Management of risk	Risk Management Framework	External challenge from Audit Wales
Financial planning and performance	Financial Performance Monitoring Reports Medium Term Financial Strategy Financial procedures Monitoring of economic indicators & associated financial receipts	Regular performance and financial reporting Annual Statement of Accounts Audit Wales Certificate of compliance
Effectiveness of internal controls	Constitution (incl. statutory officers, scheme of delegation, financial management and procurement rules) Council, Cabinet, Committees and Panels Strategic Leadership Team/Senior Management Team	External audit reports Internal audit reports Performance Development Reviews Heads of service Annual Statement of Assurance

Community engagement & public accountability	Community Involvement Strategy Community Involvement Forward Work Programme Complaints Policy	Community Engagement Feedback Ombudsman Reports
Project management & project delivery	Programme and Project management Framework	Benefits realised Report Lessons Learned Report
Procurement processes	Contract Procedure Rules	Value for Money Challenge contracts awarded
Roles & responsibilities of Members & Officers	Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and S151 Officer	External Inspections Annual Review with Cabinet
Standards of conduct & behaviour	HR policies & procedures Codes of conduct	Complaints received
Training and development of Members & Officers	Corporate Learning and Development Plan Member Development Plan	Staff Survey Performance Development Reviews Councillor Annual Reports
Compliance with laws & regulations, internal policies & procedures	Policy framework Information Management Strategy ICT Strategy Welsh Language Promotion Strategy Health and Safety Policy Internal Audit Reports Whistleblowing & other countering fraud arrangements	Independent external inspections Welsh Language Annual Report Health and Safety Annual Report

Two key pieces of assurance are provided by Internal and External Audit.

The Head of Internal Audit stated in the 2019/20 annual Audit opinion that the Council's internal control environment and systems of internal control provided adequate assurance over key business process and financial systems.

The Annual Internal Audit Report 2019/20 was scheduled to be submitted to the Audit & Governance Committee on 13 July 2020. Due to cancellation of the Committee meeting, it was agreed with the Cabinet Member for Governance & Performance and the Strategic Leadership Team that the Annual Report 2019/20 should be distributed to Members of the Audit & Governance Committee for their review and comment.

The Report concludes that the Authority has satisfactory internal control, risk management and corporate governance processes in place to manage the achievement of the Authority's objectives for the 12 months ended 31st March 2020. The findings in respect of follow up audits conducted during 2019/20 were reported to Audit & Governance Committee on a quarterly basis and 88% of critical and major recommendations have been implemented.

The external auditors, Audit Wales (formerly Wales Audit Office), issued an unqualified opinion on the accounts for 2018/19 and Letters of Compliance for the review of the Improvement Objectives and the Annual Report. Audit Wales' opinion for 2019/20 is awaited.

5 Review of Effectiveness - How do we know our arrangements are working?

This statement builds upon those of previous years but is in a new format in light of the CIPFA 'Good Governance in Local Government 2020 Practitioner Update'. Many of the key governance mechanisms remain in place and are referred to in previous statements which are available on the Council's website. Conwy County Borough Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the

effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the Senior Management Team within the Authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Head of Internal Audit's Annual Report, and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates. The effectiveness of the governance framework has been evaluated through review by the Improvement and Audit Group, and the Senior Management Team.

In light of Covid, this year's review has had to be undertaken virtually and has been delayed owing to all staff focusing on the response phase of the Covid 19 pandemic.

DEFINITION OF ASSURANCE RATINGS

The following assurance rating has been used to self-assess our governance controls.

LEVELS OF ASSURANCE	CONTROLS	RISKS
HIGH ASSURANCE	Key controls are in place to ensure the achievement of service objectives and to protect the Authority against significant foreseeable risks and are applied consistently and effectively. No significant or material errors were found.	Low priority actions required which are easily managed.
SATISFACTORY ASSURANCE	Key controls exist to enable the achievement of service objectives and to mitigate against significant foreseeable risks. However, there was some inconsistency in application and opportunities still exist to mitigate further against potential risks.	Some opportunities still exist to mitigate further against potential risks. Some risk of loss, fraud, impropriety or damage to reputation.
LIMITED ASSURANCE	Key controls are in place and to varying degrees are complied with but there are gaps in the process which leave the service exposed to risks. Objectives are not being met or are being met without achieving value for money.	There is a need to introduce additional controls and/or improve compliance with existing ones, to reduce the risk exposure to the Authority. A high risk of loss, fraud, impropriety or damage to reputation.
NO ASSURANCE	Key controls are considered to be insufficient with the absence of at least one critical control mechanism. There is also a need to improve compliance with existing controls and errors and omissions have been detected.	Key controls do not exist and objectives are not met or are being met without achieving VFM. The Authority is exposed to very significant risk, which could lead to major financial loss, reputational risk of embarrassment or failure to achieve key service objectives.

The **Three Lines of Defence Assurance Model** is central to the evaluation of effectiveness

1. First line of defence

Under the first line of defence, operational managers have ownership, responsibility and accountability for directly assessing, controlling and mitigating risks. Each Head of Service signs a Statement of Assurance each year. Each Head of Service is responsible for delivering the outcomes set out in their service plan. They are responsible for identifying and managing the risks that may affect service delivery. This work includes monitoring the effectiveness of controls put in place to mitigate the risks and carrying out remedial action where controls are weak or not in place.

Each Head of Service is required to assist the preparation of the AGS for the Council by providing an assurance statement for the internal control framework within their service. Owing to Covid, not all assurance statements were issued and this will be improved upon in 20/21. There are twice yearly Service Performance Reviews which have provided assurance that services have sound governance and in the main are progressing well against their objectives and delivery of the Corporate Plan. Financial management remains a significant challenge for all services owing to austerity, but there is good compliance with governance arrangements including risk management, audit recommendations and reports to democracy. The Authority has been recognised as an exemplar in project management and received an award from the Association of Project Management in 2019 for the Modernisation Programme.

Assurance Rating Satisfactory Assurance

2. Second line of defence

The second line of defence consists of an oversight and monitoring of activities covered by several components of internal governance (audit compliance, risk management, performance, financial control etc). This line of defence monitors and facilitates the implementation of effective governance practices by operational management and assists in reporting information up and down the organisation. A series of reports are written throughout the year including the annual report, financial reports, equality reports, Information Governance, scrutiny reports, Welsh languages reports – all of which are listed in the Governance Framework.

All reports have been presented to Scrutiny and either Cabinet or Council for review and challenge. The reports in the main identify that there the Authority is making good progress to meet Corporate Objectives and other supporting Strategies. The reports are balanced and identify areas for improvement where needed. A forward work programme is in place to ensure reports are presented in a timely manner and are regularly reviewed by the Chairs of Scrutiny with governance officers.

Assurance Rating: High Assurance

3. Third line of defence

Internal audit forms the organisation's third line of defence. An independent internal audit function with a risk-based approach to its work, provides assurance to senior management. This assurance will cover how effectively the organisation assesses and manages governance and includes assurance on the effectiveness of the first and second lines of defence. In total, in 2019/20 Internal Audit gave 39 audit opinions, of which 19 were high assurance, 14 were satisfactory assurance and 6 were limited assurance. There were no audit conclusions of no assurance.

External Audit (Audit Wales, Estyn, CIW) provides an opinion on the statement of accounts, the governance of the authority, and the governance and management of Social Care and Education Their Audit reports about the authority overall conclude that there are good governance arrangements in place.

[Audit Wales reports](#)

[Estyn Audit reports](#)

[CIW Audit reports](#)

Assurance Rating: High Assurance

Key Governance Self-Assessment Questions

1. Are Governance Arrangements effective in supporting delivery?

- Corporate Strategies, Finances and service plans are aligned to the Corporate Plan Outcomes
- Long term outcome focused plans have been in place for a number of years, and the culture of outcome based planning is embedded in the Corporate Plan and at all levels of the organisation, including service plans. All key strategic plans and corporate risks are aligned to the relevant citizen outcome and all reports submitted for democratic approval must evidence how they support the Well-being of Future Generations Act and to which Corporate Plan outcome and or risk they contribute.
- All strategic plans are produced after implementing community engagement processes and are supported with resource management. There are strong links between strategic and financial planning. Key decisions reflect the impact on a number of factors, including sustainability, and the Authority continues to embed the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 within by ensuring that the Act has been considered in all key plans and all key decisions presented to democracy
- Value for Money: the Council's Procurement policies include community benefits. They are an important part of our awarding criteria as is value for money in itself. Contract procurement rules require that managers demonstrate value for money which therefore may not always be the cheapest option

- The Conwy Opportunities Board, Service Performance Reviews, Programme and Project Boards and Performance Development Review all provide review, challenge and discussions for improvement. The Staff Suggestion Scheme also invites Staff and Members to put forward ideas for improvement.
- Annual Reports and highlight reports from programme and projects are evidence that in the main, our objectives are being delivered despite austerity. Over recent years we have had to adjust targets and in areas made a decision for managed decline in alignment with reduced budgets.
- Where there is evidence of performance in need of improvement, action plans are put in place and monitored.

2. Are there barriers to achievements?

The most significant barrier to achievement is financial austerity and the reduced capacity of staff who are taking on more roles as staff are not replaced. We continue to meet budget efficiencies but this becomes more challenging every year, and as a result difficult decisions have had to be taken to increase charges or reduce or stop some service provision.

Whilst we have an oversight of and attend all regional strategic partnerships, it is a complex landscape and careful management is needed to ensure that boards do not duplicate or conflict.

3. Is governance supporting the delivery of objectives?

- The Authority continues to review internal controls and make changes as required by legislation. Internal Audit regularly review their Assurance Map which is used to inform the Internal Audit Plan.
- The Head of Audit & Procurement Services and the Audit Managers meet regularly with service management teams to discuss their latest risks, concerns and requirements. This ensures that Internal Audit are up to date and aware of emerging issues and risks and will be able to focus resources in the greatest areas of priority and risk at the time.
- There are twice yearly performance reports to Democracy and Senior Management and all Managers can access performance data through CAMMS at any time.
- The Corporate Risk register is aligned to the Citizen Outcomes and there are measures and method statements in place to support each corporate action.
- There are routes for both the public and staff to feedback their views through the County Conversation, community engagement exercises, e-petitions, staff appraisals and a new staff ideas portal.
- There are feedback mechanisms in place through the social media, staff brief, social media and managers' forum.
- All projects and programmes have benefits realisation plans in place and keep lessons learned logs which are shared through the Programme and Project Management Forum.
- There has been an ongoing programme of modernisation across the whole Authority to ensure that we meet the highly ambitious budget reductions and ensure that we are as efficient as possible.

4. What do we do well?

- There are clearly defined functions and roles to facilitate Members and Officers working together to achieve a common purpose, and to determine the interventions necessary to meet the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and the corporate outcomes.
- All Corporate Priorities and Corporate Risks are assigned to Senior Managers and Cabinet Members in order that they can be held to account for the effectiveness of implementation.
- There are robust arrangements for effective financial control through the Authority's accounting procedures and financial regulations. These include established budget planning procedures, which are subject to risk assessment, and regular reports to members comparing forecasts of revenue and capital expenditure to annual budgets and a business planning framework process that supports the Authority's resource allocation process.
- Despite 12 years of austerity, the Authority has a good track record of managing its spending plans within the approved budget. Successive Annual Improvement Reports produced by the Wales Audit Office (now Audit Wales) concluded that there is good internal control.
- The failure in governance processes for the Mochdre Commercial Lease were reported in the last AGS, but the Authority has learnt from this, and a comprehensive action plan has been implemented to prevent a similar situation happening again.

5. What could we do better?

- We need to ensure that Statements of Assurance are received from all Heads of Service
- We need to reschedule the AGS action plan work put on hold owing to Covid
- We need to review our risks in light of Covid and the future challenges we may face
- We need to continue to build on the strengthened local community relationships built during lockdown
- We need to compile a list and time line of key policies that we need to review in light of ongoing/long term Covid restrictions
- We need to review service continuity plans in light of lessons learned from Internal Audit review of Covid 19 emergency response arrangements

6 COVID 19

It must be recognised that whilst the Annual Governance Statement assesses governance in place during 2019/20, the Covid 19 pandemic has impacted on governance arrangements from March 2020. There has been a significant impact on funding, reserves strategy and cash flow challenges and there will be longer term financial strategy implications. The funding and logistical consequences of delivering the local government response have been logged in order to draw down Hardship funds from Welsh Government

The pace at which the country moved from business as usual to lockdown was unprecedented. From a governance perspective, Democratic meetings were cancelled, but were reintroduced on line with the first Informal Members Briefing on 6th May. The first ‘formal’ virtual meeting was Planning Committee on 13th May 2020. Zoom has been used to enable simultaneous translation and public access. We are currently investigating a hybrid model of meetings but there are software limitations which are still to be overcome.

The North Wales Resilience Forum established a Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) and Tactical Coordinating group (TCG) for North Wales. A Multi-Agency Response phase strategy was initiated in line with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. The Overarching strategic aim was to:

“Respond effectively as an LRF to minimise the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on health, society and the economy, and to maintain public trust and confidence”

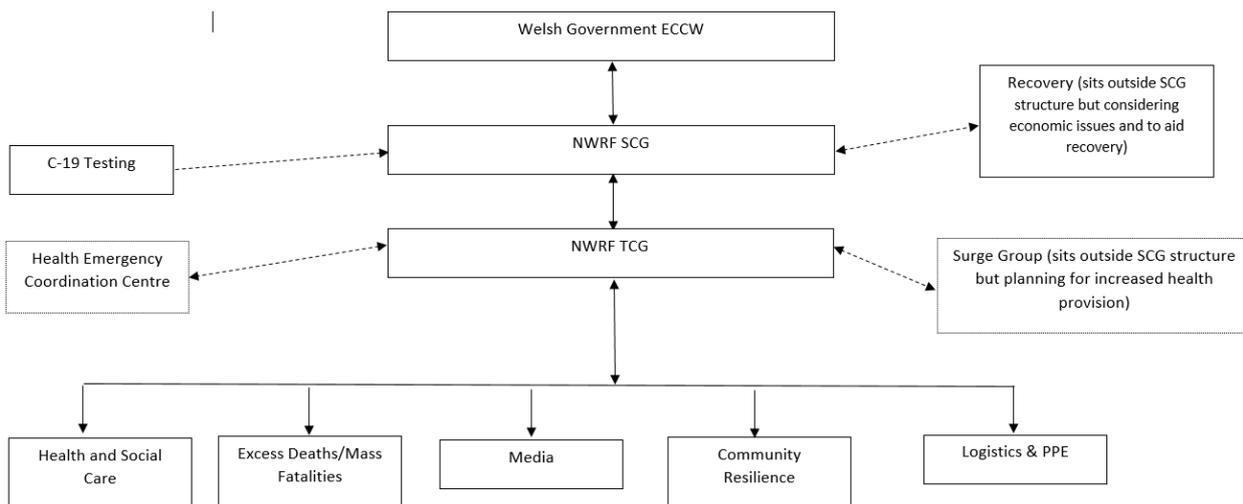


Diagram source: North Wales Resilience Forum

Internally, a series of regular meetings were held including

- Informal Cabinet
- Group Leaders
- Social Care & Education Member Briefings
- WLGA & Leaders
- North Wales Leaders
- Leader & BCUHB Chair with CEO & Strategic Directors
- Wales CEOs
- North Wales CEOs
- Covid 19 Leadership Team
- Strategic Leadership Team
- Senior Management Team
- Strategic Coordinating Group
- Social Care & Education Gold, Silver and Bronze
- Headteachers' conferences

6.1 Impact on Service Delivery

We chose to close some of our services in advance of Welsh Government decisions: e.g. theatres and conference centre; libraries, and leisure centres. In due course, Welsh Government Regulation ordered that they be (or remain) closed.

We also chose to close other areas in order to support the national regulations and guidance requiring people to "Stay Home". We closed car parks, public toilets, street bins, household waste & recycling centres and our offices. Our schools closed (for education purposes) until 29th June when they opened for 4 weeks 'check in catch up and prepare'. At the time of writing our offices remain closed to the public and are only being used by those colleagues who are unable to work from home such as payroll, Galw Gofal, CCTV, Post Room/Document Image Processing team.

As we made these decisions, we worked hard to communicate with Elected Members and the public about what was no longer open and how things were changing.

A significant proportion of our services and functions have continued and/or been enhanced during lockdown. The agile ways of working and business infrastructure that we created through our Modernisation Programme allowed the vast majority of core services to continue to operate from disparate locations. Social Services, support services, recycling and waste collections continued albeit with some changes and our office staff all continued working home. Care homes and domiciliary care providers have been at the sharp end of caring, often for the very most vulnerable in Conwy. Social Services provided additional support and guidance (including from our Environmental Health Officers) as well as providing them with as much PPE as was available.

Schools remained open 7 days a week to provide emergency childcare provision for keyworkers, additional learning needs and vulnerable children. Free School meals continued to be provided until a direct payment system was introduced and an IT loan scheme was initiated for children to access distance learning.

Different operating models contributed to the need for us to review, flex and clarify how our existing HR policies would operate. Our Corporate HR service considered what changes may be appropriately, consulted upon and communicated those changes. One key change was the introduction of additional flexibilities around working arrangements and times which, for example, enabled working parents, guardians or carers to accommodate meeting their parental responsibilities and caring responsibilities with their work commitments.

It was also imperative that we had sound and consistent data on our absence levels: for those isolating, shielding, furloughed and for those who were off sick. HR colleagues implemented a system of daily updates. The principal consultees on the HR matters were our main recognised Trades Unions (Unison, GMB and Unite).

6.2 Business Support

As the national and local economy closed down, the UK Government introduced a series of measures to support businesses including the award of 'business grants' which were linked to the rateable value of the business premises. The Local Taxation Team, in conjunction with IT and Business Support colleagues created a system that issued 460 £25,000 grants totaling £11.5 million and 2,806 £10,000 grants totalling £28 million. We have carried out a range of activity to support the business community including:

- We administered the start-up grant for Welsh Government, and made payments totalling £207,000 to businesses across Conwy county
- Our Business Support team communicated both UK and Welsh Government guidance about all business support packages to Conwy Businesses via our business database, websites and social media, to ensure that local businesses are kept informed
- The Council's Regulatory Services teams have been working closely with businesses advising them on re-opening.
- We established a Covid-19 response fund to support businesses with small purchases of PPE. £50,000 has been distributed.
- We are working with individual businesses about their needs as a result of Covid-19 closure and re-opening
- We have delivered a series of webinars for local business, which have been well attended, offering advice and support during the crisis.
- We have been working with all town councils across the county in relation to the Welsh Government's town centre funding, so that town councils can purchase items such as street furniture, signage, outdoor space coverings, etc. to support town centre recovery.

6.3 New areas of activity

As part of the national response to coronavirus new services were initiated and staff who's service areas had closed, were asked via questionnaire where they were willing to work, then retrained and redeployed to provide support.

As we began to understand the impact of lockdown on our people, and especially those who were to be shielded, it became apparent that many people would find difficulty in accessing food, medicines and other support that they would routinely manage. Within a very short period of time, we established a brand new service, our **Community Support Service**. Members of our communities (or someone on their behalf) could telephone for help, a small team of 'brokers' identified how the help could be provided and another small team shopped and delivered. This service has also engaged with Food Banks where necessary in order to support those in need.

This new service focussed on offering support to those who were specifically advised to 'Shield' themselves from the general public as a consequence of specific medical issue(s). Those Shielded people were entitled to a food box from Welsh Government and the service has been able to assist and supplement where necessary.

The service ran from mid-March and took circa 1500 calls at the height of the pandemic. A remodelled Community Service Helpline went live on the 1st of April and from then until the 31st of July we took 6,161 calls and 2,462 requests for services.

From 16th August, the collection and delivery service will end as people will no longer need to shield, but the service, will remain as a signposting service and will be ready to restart provisions should a 2nd wave occur.

6.4 Test, Trace and Protect

As an important tool in exiting and staying out of lockdown, Welsh Government announced that Councils were to have a key role in the Test, Track and Protect scheme. Regulatory Services, working with IT and HR, were able to create a team of re-deployed colleagues to begin the 8am to 6pm, 7 day a week, service in support of easing out of lockdown. As services reopen staff have had to return to their substantive roles, and a recruitment process is now taking place to create a sustainable employed model, funded by Welsh Government.

6.6 Communications

The Chief Executive issued daily e-mail updates to the Leader, Deputy Leader and Chairman which were shared with our senior managers.

Our Press Office issued daily updates to the media on service availability and we increased our social media messaging and presence to keep the public informed. Our social media platforms have grown in popularity: with 1000 new followers on Facebook since April and the 30 videos produced have been viewed 230,000 times. A newsletter was issued to every household in the county providing information on what support is available.

The Leader provided daily updates to all members, drawing on the updates from the CEO, WLGA, BCUHB and others. This became supplemented by portfolio updates from each Cabinet Member, based around regular briefings they were receiving from senior officers.

6.7 Re-purposed premises

- Venue Cymru remains repurposed as Ysbyty'r Enfys.
- The Council's leased site at Mochdre Commerce Park was repurposed as a temporary body storage facility

Thankfully neither have been needed for Covid purposes but Ysbyty'r Enfys has been utilised but Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board for other purposes. Despite the absence of a venue to deliver arts and cultural events Venue Cymru has continued to deliver education and outreach work including 'YsCWL' an on-line project providing learning videos, activities and content to support home-schooling.

Some of our Leisure Centres already host Multi-Disciplinary Health/Social Care offices, but they have also been used to accommodate maternity, antenatal and health visitor clinics, and act as Covid assessment centres as well as providing access to showering facilities for key health and social care workers. The Builder Street Coach Park, Llandudno was also repurposed as a sub-regional Covid testing centre.

6.8 Looking Forward:

Renewal

As we move into recovery, we have established a Renewal Programme.

The programme will build and maximise upon the beneficial ways of working realised post lockdown and ensure these are further employed appropriately in the immediate, medium and longer term.

There is a real opportunity to do things differently to the benefit of carbon reduction, staff welfare, service delivery to the public and efficiency across the organisation.

Across the Authority, there are several projects, working to 'unlock' our front line services and consider how we work in the future. These have overlapping areas and need to be co-ordinated to enable consistency across all services. The two main projects within the programme are Workwise 2020 and Service Renewal.

Workwise 2020

Workwise 2020 focuses on our operating model moving forward including continued working from home alongside safe re-opening of our office spaces.

Service Renewal

Service Renewal focuses on safe re-opening of our front line services to the public.

6.9 Review and Horizon Scanning

Internal audit are under taking a review of Covid 19 emergency response arrangements commencing in September 2020.

A horizon scanning assessment in conjunction with our insurers, Zurich, will take place in October 2020 to ascertain future risks, which includes:

- Identification of new and emerging risks arising in the aftermath of COVID-19
- Assessment of how the risk landscape has changed as a result of COVID-19
- Visualise the current perception of risk within the authority
- Comparing Zurich's view of the key risks with our own
- Begin to put controls in place to mitigate risks going forward
- Maintain organisational resilience during recovery from COVID-19

6.10 An assessment of the longer-term consequences

An assessment of the longer-term consequences and recovery arising from the Covid 19 pandemic is also underway via the autumn service performance reviews which will ask:

a) Looking back

Overview of the service's approach to Covid response
Achievements / Main challenges

b) Looking forward

What the service's objectives for the rest of 20/21 look like
What are the service challenges
Have business models changed temporarily/ permanently
Will service delivery change

c) New risks or issues

d) Wellbeing of staff – how are teams doing

7 Governance Issues

We have been advised on the implications of the result of the **review of the effectiveness of the governance framework** by the Audit & Governance Committee, Finance & Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet and that the arrangements **continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework**. The areas to be specifically addressed with new actions planned are outlined below.

There are no significant governance issues, but after a process of self-evaluation to review our effectiveness, the following internal recommendations for improvement have been made.

- R1** Ensure that Statements of Assurance are received from all Heads of Service
- R2** Reschedule the AGS action plan work put on hold owing to Covid
- R3** Review our risks in light of Covid and the future challenges we may face
- R4** Continue to build on the strengthened local community relationships built during lockdown.
- R5** Compile a list and timetable of key policies that we need to review in light of ongoing/long term Covid restrictions
- R6** Review service continuity plans in light of lessons learned from Internal Audit review of Covid 19 emergency response arrangements

We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the above matters to further enhance our governance arrangements. While our corporate governance arrangements have been effective in supporting the Council through the many changes it has gone through in recent years, we will ensure that this continues to be the case in 2020-21 and in to future years as we continue to meet our challenges. At the time of writing, the Authority is responding to & recovering from to the Covid-19 pandemic. Our governance arrangements are working well in these unprecedented circumstances, and while we cannot yet say what the long term impacts of Covid-19 will be for public finance and public services, the change could be profound, and we need to continue to ensure that our Governance

Framework is fit for purpose.

Conclusion

The Authority has access to good information on which to base decisions which are made in a transparent manner through public documented meetings. Elected Members are aware that decisions must consider the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and through the New Member Induction all Elected Members were made aware of their scrutiny responsibilities. Decisions are subject to effective external and internal scrutiny and where weaknesses are found, action plans are promptly put in place and monitored Based on this self-assessment, the overall conclusion is that our governance arrangements for the period 2019/20 were fit for purpose.

We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation throughout the year.

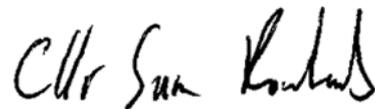
Signed



Date 03/09/2020

**Iwan Davies
Chief Executive**

Signed



Date 03/09/2020

**Councillor Sam Rowlands
Leader of the Council**