

# Annual Governance Statement 2020/2021

Blackpool Council



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## Acknowledgement of Responsibility

Blackpool Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards. It needs to ensure that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

The Accounts and Audit Regulations (2015) require the Council to conduct a review, at least once a year, on the effectiveness of its system of internal control and include an Annual Governance Statement reporting on the review with the Statement of Accounts.

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## The Principles of Good Governance

The CIPFA Delivering Good Governance publication (2016) defines the various principles of good governance in the public sector and how they relate to each other and are defined as:

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

During 2020/21 the Council developed a Code of Governance and Governance Framework which was considered by the Audit Committee in April 2021. The Code of Corporate Governance sets out the principles of good governance and what arrangements it has in place to ensure that the Council conducts its business in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

This governance framework which is a part of the Code of Governance has been used to compile this Annual Governance Statement for Blackpool Council to deliver on the aforementioned principles, for the year ended 31st March 2021 and up to the date of the approval for the statement of accounts for that year. The system of internal control is a significant part of the framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness.

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## Key Challenges

This section sets out key challenges faced by the Council in the year which have impacted on the governance arrangements in place.

### Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic

The Council's governance processes were reviewed during the Covid-19 crisis and a number of temporary changes to these processes were made to address the urgent requirements of the situation. An urgent Council Executive meeting was held on 23rd March 2020 which agreed that a major incident should be declared for the Council in relation to Covid-19. The Council Executive meeting agreed to a temporary delegation of powers to the Council Chief Executive, or in his absence the Council's Director of Resources, on issues caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and to protect citizens in relation to public safety. To mitigate against any future emergencies, the Council agreed that the Chief Executive (or in their absence a nominated deputy) can exercise any urgent Council decision required relating to a major incident, including power to act outside of the Forward Plan, budget and policy frameworks and Contracts Procedure Rules, following consultation with appropriate persons as set out in the Constitution.

All Council services pulled together further embedding a culture of cross-departmental working in order to respond effectively to the pandemic and continue to support the residents and businesses across the town.

In response to Covid-19, the Council invoked its established Business Continuity Management Framework. The Corporate Business Continuity Plan includes the Council's critical activities list, incorporating statutory responsibilities and recovery timescales. The critical activities list was used to assess essential Council resource requirements during Covid-19. The Corporate Leadership Team determined the emergency response impact on service delivery and necessary service prioritisation.

In the first three months the Corporate Leadership Team met on a daily basis to discuss the critical activities list and ensure that resources were appropriately deployed to those services which could not fail. The Senior Leadership Team met virtually each week so that important information about the pandemic and the Council's response could be shared. Each week the Chief Executive and his management team also briefed the political Group Leaders and both MPs on the decisions taken and those to be taken each week. Weekly meetings were also held with the Trade Unions to keep them up to date on employee matters and to listen to, and respond quickly to, any concerns. The frequency of these meetings has reduced during 2020/21 however the forums have remained in place to ensure the quick and effective sharing of information and to enable actions to be taken as soon as possible and necessary.

The decisions taken during the initial stages of the pandemic were logged on the Council's Incident Decision Log and an oversight was maintained to ensure appropriate decision making protocols were followed that risks were managed throughout.

The Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic was and continues to be co-ordinated with partners through the Lancashire Resilience Forum. This includes co-ordination with all the local authorities across Lancashire and with statutory agencies including Lancashire Constabulary, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service and North West Ambulance Service.

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The Council took on new responsibilities due to Covid-19 in relation to paying urgent grants to businesses and has provided support to local businesses to help them to access the grants that they are entitled to and the payment of a wide range of grants has continued during 2020/21. In addition to grants to businesses the Council has received a number of new revenue streams during 2020/21 due to additional funding being provided by the Government to fund issues such as infection control measures and to compensate for a proportion of lost income. These additional revenue streams have resulted in additional challenges in terms of ensuring compliance with the terms of the allocations and ensuring that these are correctly accounted for in the 2020/21 accounts.

Extensive targeted support to the community was provided through establishing Community Hubs and working with voluntary sector agencies in the provision of a range of services such as befriending services for residents in isolation were implemented.

The Council has proactively engaged with residents during the pandemic using a range of channels including social media and it will continue to build on this engagement throughout the rest of the pandemic and going forward. The Council will also continue with its Channel Change agenda to build on these connections with residents, partnerships and businesses to provide support during the recovery phase of the pandemic.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, a monthly recovery report is being produced for Corporate Leadership Team providing information on the impact of the pandemic on the residents of Blackpool as well as the economy of the town and this helps inform decisions which the Council make around recovery from the pandemic.

The disruption caused by the pandemic has prompted a mini-review of the Council Plan to ensure that unavoidable disruption to the timescales of major projects is reflected, and additional work needed to address the ongoing issues caused is captured

The Council quickly adapted to new ways of working and controls were established relating to many Council staff working from home due to Covid-19 including the introduction of a new Virtual Private Network to enable an increased number of staff to securely access the Councils network from home. Likewise, the use of Zoom was introduced early to enable the broadcast of public accessible meetings. Work is now underway to determine what 'returning to normal' will look like with the potential of a hybrid working model adopted which will allow staff more flexibility in terms of working from home and time spent in the office.

Significant work has been undertaken to ensure that the Council is a Covid Secure workplace to enable those staff who need to be in work to undertake their roles safely. This continues to be reviewed in light of changes to Government Guidance. Procedures were established or flexed to address the Human Resource implications of the Covid-19 situation. A detailed employee support offer and sources of advice for staff was implemented. Staff communications and changes to the use of staff resources have been addressed through employee frequently asked questions published on the Hub. More proactive publicity of staff compliments is helping to increase morale in services that have been struggling due to the pressures of the pandemic.

As the pandemic continued throughout the year steps were taken to ensure take-up of PCR and Lateral Flow Testing and encouragement of vaccine roll-out across the town. In addition, contact tracing was picked up by the Council to enable the quick and efficient establishment of 'contacts' to help reduce transmission in the town. During periods where lockdown measures were relaxed the Public Protection Team had a key role in ensuring that local businesses were operating in a Covid Secure way and the use of Covid Marshalls was introduced.

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The Council responded quickly and efficiently to changes in Government Policy and the latest public health advice on infection control in order to keep our staff, residents and visitors to the town safe. This work continues into 2021/2022 as the world continues to live and manage a pandemic outbreak. Lessons learned to date have been considered during 2020/21 and will continue to do so over the new financial year.

## Exit from the European Union

The Council has been working to prepare for EU Exit which is being overseen by a working group of officers from across the council, working in conjunction with the Lancashire Resilience Forum (LRF). The Council has continued to engage on EU Exit related matters through a number of regional and national forums including working with the Local Government Association (LGA) and various Whitehall departments. Due to the preparations which were undertaken there has been minimal impact on the Council as a result of the UK leaving the European Union.

## The Governance Framework

The key elements of the structures and processes that comprise Blackpool Council's governance arrangements are summarised below.

### Code of Conduct and Behaviours

Codes of Conduct are in place that define standards of behaviours for elected members and officers. Adherence to these is a key part of good governance. These are further supported by the Council's Whistleblowing Policy, Registers of Interests and Gifts and Hospitality Policies.

Processes are in place to deal with non-compliance through the Council's Disciplinary Policy for Officers and the Monitoring Officer and/or Standards complaints procedure for Elected Members.

A Leadership Charter is in place which aims to bring to life the vision for the Council's workforce as outlined in the Workforce Strategy 2016-2020 and it has been embedded with the Individual Performance Appraisal Process (IPA). There are plans in place to refresh this during 2021/22 based on feedback from the staff survey which is being undertaken.

Key Supporting Policies and Procedures	
Code of Conduct for Members	<a href="#">Blackpool Council constitution   Part 5a Code of conduct for members</a>
Officer Code of Conduct	<a href="#">Blackpool Council constitution   Part 5b - Officer code of conduct</a>
Registers of Members' Allowances and Interests	<a href="#">Allowances and registers of Interest (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>
Whistleblowing Policy	<a href="#">Agenda for Standards Committee on Thursday, 20th July, 2017, 6.00 pm (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>

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## Organisational Culture

The Council's organisational culture is driven by the Corporate Leadership Team and Executive and a set of values have been defined, previously agreed by Council which all employees and elected members are expected to adhere to and these include:

- We are **accountable** for delivering on the promises we make and take responsibility for our actions and the outcomes achieved
- We are committed to being **fair** to people and treat everybody we meet with dignity and respect
- We take pride in delivering **quality** services that are community focussed and are based on listening carefully to what people need
- We act with integrity and we are **trustworthy** in all our dealings with people and we are open about the decisions we make and the services we offer
- We are **compassionate**, caring, hard-working and committed to delivering the best services that we can with a positive and collaborative attitude.

The Director of Children's Services and her staff are embedding a new culture across Blackpool 'Blackpool Families Rock'. Our commitment is to work with families not 'do things to them' with the child at the heart of everything that we do and to work with families at the lowest possible level to prevent their needs from escalating to a higher level.

To deliver its ambitions the Council needs to be efficient and resilient. An entrepreneurial culture has been developed across the Council and continues to be embedded in order to develop different ways of working and maximising our chances of achieving our outcomes. Examples of this include our Wholly-Owned Companies, bidding for funding, working in partnership, the business loans fund and making savings whilst transforming our services.

Key Supporting Policies and Procedures	
Senior Employees	<a href="#">Blackpool Council   Senior employees and officers</a>
Council strategies, policies and plans	<a href="#">Blackpool Council   Council strategies policies and plans</a>
Working Well with Children and Families in Lancashire	<a href="#">Early Help and Thresholds for Intervention   Blackpool Safeg... (blackpoolsafeguarding.org.uk)</a>

## Ethical and Responsible Governance

At its meeting of 26th June 2019, the Council passed a motion to declare a Climate Emergency. The primary commitments made are to make the Council's activities net-zero carbon by 2030 and achieve 100% clean energy across the Council's full range of functions by the same date.

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The declaration also covers leadership to achieve a reduction in emissions across the town generally, engagement with the public and stakeholders, effecting a culture change across our organisation, wholly-owned companies, staff and partners and taking a role to exert wider influence beyond Blackpool on this issue.

A steering group has been established to lead this issue internally, which includes representation from the Council's wholly-owned companies and an initial action plan is in place. A Citizen's Assembly held across four sessions in January and February 2021 brought a representative cross-section of the public to learn about the issues and make recommendations, which are currently being assessed in terms of feasibility and fit with the agenda. Along with work to identify a carbon reduction roadmap for the town and organisation, these pieces of work will result in the development of a longer-term action plan. A new team is being created and recruited to, ensuring that progress can be made at pace, with new performance indicators being identified to check progress.

The Council aims to fulfil its legal obligations on equalities. We understand that fairness means making reasonable adjustments for people and groups so they can get access to services and support. Our approach to this is set out in our equality goals, which are reviewed every 4 years.

All new Council plans and strategies are reviewed to make sure they are tailored to the needs of groups with protected characteristics. Going beyond this, in the course of our work we also consider how to contribute to eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation; how to advance equality of opportunity and how we can help different groups of people get along together.

Our equality objectives aim to get more people to tell us they experience fair treatment by Council services; to make our workforce representative of our communities, with more people from diverse backgrounds involved in decision making at every level; that equality and diversity is embedded in staff culture; and that we celebrate growing diversity and increase respect and understanding for all.

Key Supporting Policies and Procedures	
Climate Emergency Declaration	<a href="#">Blackpool Council climate emergency</a>   <a href="#">Climate emergency</a>
Workforce Diversity Report	<a href="#">Blackpool Council</a>   <a href="#">Workforce diversity report</a>
Gender Pay Gap Report	<a href="#">Blackpool Council Gender pay gap report 2020</a>

## Commitment to Openness, Communication and Consultation

The Council complies with the requirements of the Transparency Agenda and provides a range of information in the public domain through its website.

The Council adopts a priority campaign planning approach using a variety of different marketing communications channels. Key messages are also communicated to residents in the 'Your Blackpool' publication which due to the pandemic has been largely delivered as an 'e' version rather than directly delivered to households. The Council has enhanced its use of social media and has started to move towards greater use of these platforms as part of a strategic approach to communications. The early part of the pandemic also saw more innovative ways of communication such as key messages on 'bin tags' distributed via the Council's wholly owned refuse collection company Blackpool Waste Services Ltd.

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The Council continue to increase the direct communication and engagement with local businesses so that they have a detailed understanding of the benefits of the regeneration work that the Council is undertaking. This is being done via the Council's own communication channels as well as utilising partner organisations including StayBlackpool, VisitBlackpool, the Town Centre BID and the Blackpool Business Leadership Group.

The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 allowed meetings to be held virtually during the pandemic. This increased access to the public with all formal meetings available to view live and after the event on the Council's You Tube page. The public were also able to continue to 'attend' and speak at committee and full Council meetings through this medium.

The Council has in place a system to respond to Freedom of Information requests and compliance with the timelines is managed by the Information Governance Team and reported through to the Corporate Leadership Team by the Data Protection Officer. The team also prepared for a consensual inspection by the Information Commissioner's Office in April 2021 which saw 'high' assurance given in areas for freedom of information, governance and accountability and information security.

Consultation and engagement with the public takes place by the lead service area, which can access the Council's in-house cost recovery research team Infusion Research, for wider ranging or more complex consultation exercises.

The Council last undertook a resident's survey in 2018 and was due to undertake one in 2020. However, the impact of the pandemic has meant that the slot for the survey in May could not be used. It is important to ensure the data is comparable and this would normally mean that the survey should be undertaken at the same time of the year. Due to the ongoing impact of the pandemic, the survey has been postponed until May 2022.

Structures are in place to ensure consultation with other public and voluntary sector agencies through the Fairness Commission and also local businesses through the Blackpool Business Leadership Group.

Key Supporting Policies and Procedures	
Council Agendas and Minutes	<a href="#">Browse Meetings, 2021 (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>
Online Council meetings	<a href="#">Blackpool Council - YouTube</a>
Open Government Licence	<a href="#">Open Government Licence (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>
Transparency and Open Data	<a href="#">Transparency and open data (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>
Freedom of Information	<a href="#">Freedom of information (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>

## Developing, Communicating and Translating the Vision

A thorough review of the Council Plan was undertaken in 2018 to ensure it continues to address the key issues facing the town. As a result, the Council Plan 2019-2024 sets out the vision for Blackpool to continue to be *'The UK's number one family resort with a thriving economy that supports a happy and healthy community who are proud of this unique town'*. The two priorities remain the same as the previous iteration of the plan:

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- The Economy: Maximising Growth and Opportunity across Blackpool.
- Communities: Creating Stronger Communities and Increasing Resilience.

Beneath each priority the plan details the key challenges faced by Blackpool and the key projects and schemes which will be implemented to address these issues. The Council Plan seeks to address the big issues and policy drivers facing local government. The concept of organisational resilience – ensuring that the organisation is capable of delivering the priorities, meeting its legal requirements, and maintaining sustainability into the future - is captured throughout the plan, with the detail included in the Council’s wider policy framework. Given the impact of the pandemic, the existing plan has been rolled forward, with the actions continuing, but a full review being planned for Autumn 2021. The Council priorities feed into directorate business plans and are a key tool for managers to use when developing business plans. The business plans then feed into Individual Performance Appraisals (IPA).

The Council has a key role in working with partner organisations in order to translate the vision for Blackpool into deliverable actions. This has been particularly demonstrated through the core coordination role that the Council took on board in response to the pandemic from March 2020 to ensure that the local community was effectively supported by a wide range of organisations.

The Council’s Annual Staff Conference was not able to be held in the usual way this last year but the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council hosted a ‘thank you’ event for staff in December 2020 marking all the hard work, dedication and commitment displayed by staff, as a result of the pandemic.

## Key Supporting Policies and Procedures

Council Plan 2019 to 2024

[Blackpool Council Plan 2019 to 2024](#)

## Performance Management

A Policy Framework is in place which sets out the corporate strategies and plans which are in place. Corporate resource is available to support services on the development of strategies and shaping them in line with corporate objectives.

The Council’s performance management system is now well established, with strategic performance reported to Corporate Leadership Team, members of the Executive and the Scrutiny Leadership Board, whilst local performance indicators are managed through the business planning process. The suite of Council Plan headline KPIs will be reviewed so that some of the measures around post-COVID recovery can be incorporated into ongoing performance reporting. This review will also look to incorporate KPIs for a new corporate priority around organisational resilience, as recommended in the Corporate Peer Challenge which took place in March 2020.

In March 2019, the Secretary of State appointed a DfE Commissioner for Children’s Services in Blackpool, following an inadequate judgement by Ofsted of the Council’s Children’s Services from its inspection in November 2018. One of the recommendations of the Commissioner was to establish a strategic and overarching Children and Families Partnership. This Partnership Board was established in January 2020 and meets quarterly. It is chaired by the Chief Executive and has an emerging set of principles and priorities around inclusion, literacy and the social impact of poverty. The Children’s Improvement Board has been replaced by the Getting to Good Board;

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this partnership meets bi-monthly, monitoring progress and driving improvement in performance and practice in children's social care.

Following the HMIP inspection of youth offending services in October 2018, Blackpool's Youth Offending Partnership developed an improvement plan to address the recommendations from the inspection. The actions from this improvement plan were delivered throughout 2019/20. In February 2020, a peer review was conducted by the Youth Justice Sector Improvement Partnership, the outcome of which has informed the development of a new strategic improvement plan for 2020/21. The partnership is currently awaiting confirmation of the arrangements for the next inspection by HMIP. Alongside this, the partnership undertook a self-assessment against the new national standards for youth justice services (as required by the Youth Justice Board) which has led to the development of action plans for each of the national standards themes. Senior officers from across the partnership have been assigned as theme leads to drive delivery of these action plans. The delivery of the improvement plan and theme action plans is supported by a robust performance and quality assurance framework to ensure that improvements in performance and practice are embedded within services.

In order to improve performance the Council participates in peer reviews and benchmarking exercises to learn from others and to ensure that services delivered are value for money. The LGA undertook a Corporate Peer Challenge exercise for the Council in March 2020, as part of its work to strengthen the local government sector. The challenge focussed on the Council's understanding of the local context to set an appropriate vision and priorities, provision of effective leadership of external stakeholders, financial planning and viability, organisational leadership and governance, and capacity to deliver. Reflecting on our last Peer Challenge in 2014, the Council developed a position statement outlining our strengths and challenges and hosted the LGA's team for a week of interviews and focus groups. The final feedback was delayed due to the team comprising of senior officers and members at the forefront of responding to the pandemic. Initial feedback focused around three key themes arising related to climate change, medium term financial sustainability and communications. A final report will shortly be produced and that will be published along with an action plan demonstrating how the council has responded to the recommendations. In addition, the Internal Audit Plan 2021/22 includes reviews of the three identified areas to gain assurance that adequate progress is being made.

The Libraries service invited an LGA team in for a similar process as part of the development of their Libraries Ambition Plan in June 2019. Commenting positively on the extensive research underpinning the plan, they judged the Plan to be achievable, and advised on ways of further strengthening the likelihood of the plan being implemented effectively. This fed into the ultimate approval of the Plan by the executive in June 2020. The process of internal and external consultation / review and scrutiny of this plan prior to approval is an example of good practice and a model which other services wishing to significantly transform will be encouraged to adopt going forward.

The Individual Performance Appraisal process which is in place is part of the Council's wider approach to performance management. The IPA process is an important tool designed to provide an opportunity to establish and understand expectations and to evaluate performance in order to help employees develop to their full potential. The IPA process is not a replacement for day to day people management so in addition employees are supported by their line managers and should be mentored, coached and directed according to their individual needs. This may come through regular one to one meetings, formal supervision meetings, team meetings and

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informal feedback. During the pandemic flexibility in undertaking IPAs was given to those services which were most impacted by the pandemic to enable them to focus on key priorities.

The Leadership Charter supports the Council's priorities and values and is included in the Manager's IPA template. The Council has undertaken two Leadership surveys to benchmark performance and progress against the new Charter and this has evidenced that from a good baseline there has been further improvement. Going forward the plan is to undertake this survey at regular intervals.

Key Supporting Policies and Procedures			
Policy Framework			<a href="#">Blackpool Council constitution   Part 8 - Strategic planning process</a>
Children's Service Inspections	Ofsted		<a href="#">Ofsted   Blackpool Borough Council</a>
Youth Offending Inspection	Team		<a href="#">An inspection of youth offending services in Blackpool (justiceinspectors.gov.uk)</a>

## Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibilities and functions are in place for each Council committee including Licensing, Planning, Standards, Scrutiny Committees and the Audit Committee. These are reviewed annually with any changes made at the Council's Annual Meeting to ensure that they continue to be fit for purpose. The Executive has agreed a set of criteria relating to the levels of decision making within the Executive Framework which provide clarity and consistency for decision makers.

All Council Officers, including the Corporate Leadership Team, have a job description which set out their roles and responsibilities. Annually, through the Individual Performance Appraisal process individual objectives are set for each officer which align with their job description and the Business Plan for the Service in which they work.

The Corporate Leadership Team has been extended fortnightly to involve key Heads of Service in the decision making process. Steps continue to be taken to address some of the concerns with 'hard to recruit to posts' such as Children's Social Workers. In addition, there is ongoing investment in digital technologies to help improve capacity across the Council.

The Council's Constitution, including the Scheme of Delegation, sets out the arrangements and protocols which are in place to enable effective decision making within the authority.

The Council has in place effective arrangements to discharge the Head of Paid Service function and this role is undertaken by the Chief Executive.

The Council has designated a Monitoring Officer and Deputy with appropriate qualifications and experience. The Monitoring Officer has the specific duty to ensure that the Council, its officers and its Elected Members maintain the highest standards in all they do and is responsible to the Council for ensuring that governance procedures are followed and all applicable statutes and regulations are complied with.

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Key Supporting Policies and Procedures	
Responsibilities for Functions	<a href="#">Part 3 - Responsibility for functions (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>
Responsibilities for Functions - Officers	<a href="#">Part 3 - Responsibility for functions (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>

## Decision Making

The Constitution sets out the functions and responsibilities of the Council, the Executive and committees. Included in this are the delegation arrangements adopted by the Council and the Executive and this is reviewed on a regular basis.

All Executive decisions contain all relevant policy implications including financial, risk management, human resources, equality analysis, legal, sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations and links to Council priorities. All Executive decisions are subject to finance and legal approval before they are taken forward for a decision to be made. The Monitoring Officer or a designated representative, receives all decisions before they are processed and therefore is able to check the robustness of data quality prior to a decision being submitted for formal approval.

Cabinet Member and relevant Officer Decisions are published to meet transparency requirements and inform the public.

A framework for undertaking compliance checks to ensure that decision making processes are appropriate has been developed and these reviews are jointly carried out by Internal Audit and Democratic Governance and the findings reported to Audit Committee.

During the 2020/ 2021 as a result of the pandemic, the Executive and the Council both reviewed the 'urgency' decision making procedures and adapted them to allow decision making by the Chief Executive with appropriate consultation and feedback to Cabinet Members in relation to the Executive and Group Leaders in relation to Council. The May 2020 Council meeting also provided a first opportunity for full feedback and accountability in relation to the early months of the pandemic. The Director of Public Health has also provided regular feedback to the Council meetings during 2020/ 2021 and produced weekly updates via the Council's you tube channel and social media platforms.

Key Supporting Policies and Procedures	
Agendas and Minutes	<a href="#">Browse Meetings, 2020 (blackpool.gov.uk)</a> <a href="#">Browse Meetings, 2021 (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>
Executive and Cabinet Member Decisions	<a href="#">, 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021 (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>
Officer Decisions	<a href="#">Officer decisions, 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021 (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>

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## **Compliance with relevant Laws, Regulations, Internal Policies and Procedures**

A wide range of corporate policies and procedures are in place to ensure compliance with laws and regulations. These cover all key areas including financial management, human resources, procurement, contract management, risk management, business continuity, data protection, health and safety management arrangements and safeguarding arrangements.

Internal and external audit arrangements are in place to provide a reasonable level of assurance on compliance with the Council's system of internal control.

The Council has obtained PSNN, PCI and N3 security compliance so that it can effectively share data with other organisations including the National Health Service and Department for Work and Pensions. There is an ongoing review of cyber risks and progress against this is monitored by the Audit Committee. An ICT Security Policy is in place.

An Information Governance Team is in place managed by the Head of Service whom carries out the function of the Statutory Data Protection Officer and works with Council services to ensure that personal information is appropriately safeguarded in line with GDPR.

A Corporate Procurement and Projects Team supports Heads of Services and Service Managers to undertake market engagement for those goods, services and works which are delivered through third-party organisations. Procedures are in place to ensure compliance with the Public Contract Regulations Act 2015, European Union Procurement Directive 2014 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. Standard Control Documents are used to ensure consistency of practice, demonstrate value for money and to maximise social value through tendering and contract arrangements.

Mandatory training is delivered in a number of ways including a mandatory training pack for non IT users and through the iPool online system for IT users. This ensures casual, temporary and permanent employees are aware of legislative requirements. Reporting tools have been developed to enable Managers to monitor completion of mandatory training courses and completion of Individual Performance Appraisals in real time.

The Council's Monitoring Officer has a role in ensuring that the Council acts within the remit of relevant law and regulations and that a robust democratic process ensures the application of the Constitution. The Monitoring Officer is responsible for the in-house legal team which serves as an additional control to ensure that the Council operates within the constraints of the law and the team hold LEXCEL accreditation.

A number of arrangements are in place to deal with potential non-compliance and these include a Corporate Complaints Panel and Serious Case Reviews. These are chaired independently of the service which has breached requirements to ensure that objective decisions can be taken.

A Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Panel is in place which reviews any positive DBS's in relation to pre-employment checks to ensure Council wide robust and consistent decision making.

A Health and Safety Team is in place which provide advice, support and guidance to managers across the Council regarding compliance with health and safety legislation. The team is responsible for issuing the Corporate Arrangements which all employees should adhere too. The Health and Safety Team also undertake a programme of audits to ensure that managers maintain their manuals and comply with statutory requirements.

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## Key Supporting Policies and Procedures

Corporate Customer Feedback Policy	<a href="#">Corporate Customer Feedback Policy - 0819 - FINAL VERSION - V1.1 (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>
Data Protection and GDPR	<a href="#">Blackpool Council data protection registration   GDPR</a>

## Financial Management

The Council has an appropriately qualified and experienced designated Chief Finance Officer who holds Section 151 responsibilities and a deputy has also been appointed. The Chief Finance Officer has arrangements in place for financial management, financial reporting and value for money which is assessed annually by the Council's external auditors.

Financial Regulations are in place which are supported by a Scheme of Delegation to ensure that managers are aware of the level of expenditure they are able to authorise.

The Council sets a lawful annual budget and is part way through a six-year Medium Term Financial Sustainability Strategy which runs to the end of the 2021/22 financial year. The associated plan is updated on an annual basis to enable early planning on the financial position to take place. A full review of this strategy is planned for 2021/22.

Monthly financial monitoring reports, starting from month 0, are reported to the Corporate Leadership Team, the Executive and Tourism, Economy and Communities Scrutiny Committee.

The Council's financial management arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Finance Officer in Local Government (2016).

The Council facilitates a Public Inspection of the Accounts and publishes details of all payment transactions over and above the minimum requirements of the Transparency Code.

## Key Supporting Policies and Procedures

Statutory Chief Finance Officer (holding Section 151 responsibilities)	<a href="#">Blackpool Council   Senior employees and officers</a>
Annual Budgets	<a href="#">Annual budgets (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>
Budget and Policy Framework	<a href="#">Blackpool Council constitution   Part 4c Budget and policy framework</a>
Financial Procedure Rules	<a href="#">Blackpool Council constitution   Part 4f - Financial procedure rules</a>

## Audit Arrangements

An Audit Committee is in place which is independent of the scrutiny function. As a full committee of the Council it is able to discharge all the core functions of an Audit Committee outlined in the CIPFA Audit Committee: Practical

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Guidance for Local Authorities (2018), from which the Committee has adopted the model terms of reference. Over the past twelve months the Chair of the Audit Committee has continued to raise the profile of the Audit Committee and has presented a report to Full Council on the work of the Committee and has proactively requested Chief Officers and Head of Services to attend Committee to be challenged and held to account where controls issues have been identified. Two independent member positions have co-opted onto the Committee to enhance the robustness of the Committee and provide valuable experience and support to the Committee in its work.

Modular training is delivered prior to each Audit Committee meeting to ensure that members have the appropriate skills and knowledge to effectively discharge their duties.

The Council has an internal audit team who prepare an Annual Internal Audit Plan which is approved by the Corporate Leadership Team and the Audit Committee. This includes a balance of risk and compliance work. The audit opinion and assurance statement for each audit is reported quarterly to the Audit Committee.

In 2019/20 the Head of Audit and Risk provided an Annual Audit Opinion that sufficient assurance work was undertaken to provide a reasonable conclusion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the control environment and that the overall control environment at the Council is adequate. The exciting yet challenging regeneration programme being implemented by the Council increases risk both in terms of project delivery and financial risks. The financial position of the Council's wholly owned companies also creates a number of financial sustainability risks which need to be closely monitored going forward. The Covid-19 pandemic also impacted on the control environment and this will continue to be monitored during 2021/22 and steps taken to manage risk as effectively as possible given the challenging circumstances with a particular focus on recovery and impact on the sustainability of the Council. Where weaknesses were identified through internal audit work the team have worked with management to agree appropriate remedial actions and a timescale for improvement.

The Council's internal audit arrangements conform to the governance requirements the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. An external review of the Council's compliance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards took place in 2016/17 which confirmed conformance with the standards. The recommendations made in the external assessment report have been incorporated into the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme for the service.

External audit arrangements are in place and representatives are invited to attend Audit Committee to present the findings of their work and raise any concerns which they may have.

## Key Supporting Policies and Procedures

Internal Audit Charter	<a href="#">Appendix 7(a) - Agenda for Audit Committee on Thursday, 12th March, 2020, 6.00 pm (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>
Internal Audit Plan	<a href="#">Appendix 6(a) - Agenda for Audit Committee on Thursday, 12th March, 2020, 6.00 pm (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>
Annual Audit Opinion	<a href="#">Appendix 7(a) - Agenda for Audit Committee on Thursday, 29th April, 2021, 6.00 pm (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>

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Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme	<a href="#">Appendix 8(a) - Agenda for Audit Committee on Thursday, 29th April, 2021, 6.00 pm (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>
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## Risk Management

A Corporate Risk Management Group is in place to coordinate and promote risk management activity in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework 2021-2025. It is supported by directorate and thematic risk management groups.

All directorates have nominated risk champions to promote best practice in their areas and ensure that service level risk registers are in place and that risk registers are developed for major projects and partnerships where appropriate.

The Strategic Risk Register is reviewed by the Corporate Leadership Team and considered by the Audit Committee annually. Chief Officers identified in the Strategic Risk Register are required to attend Audit Committee to explain how the risks are being managed and what further mitigating controls may be required.

Risk management should be considered for all decisions made by the Council and these are evidenced in the dedicated section on the decision making template.

A Corporate Business Continuity Plan and Critical Activities List are in place and this is supported by service level business continuity plans.

Key Supporting Policies and Procedures	
Risk Management Framework	<a href="#">Appendix 8(a) - Agenda for Audit Committee on Thursday, 21st January, 2021, 6.00 pm (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>
Strategic Risk Register	<a href="#">Appendix 9(b) - Agenda for Audit Committee on Thursday, 12th March, 2020, 6.00 pm (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>
Business Continuity Framework	<a href="#">Appendix 9(a) - Agenda for Audit Committee on Thursday, 21st January, 2021, 6.00 pm (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>

## Counter Fraud and Anti-Corruption Arrangements

The Council has developed counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements in line with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption. A Fraud Prevention Charter has been developed and approved by the Corporate Leadership Team and the Audit Committee. Any suspected instance of fraud or corruption should be reported to the Head of Audit and Risk so that an appropriate investigation into the matter can be undertaken.

A dedicated Corporate Fraud Team is in place which deals with a range of corporate fraud issues and proactive work has commenced on high risk areas such as insurance fraud, blue badges and council tax. However, the focus

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of the teams work during the year is pre and post assurance work on the various business lockdown and restart grants which have been made available by government as a result of the pandemic.

The Council has appropriate procedures in place to deal with the risk of money laundering and also to raise awareness of the Bribery Act and ensure that appropriate controls are in place to reduce the risk. An Anti-Money Laundering Policy is in place and this is supported by an iPool training course for employees to complete.

The Council participates in the National Fraud Initiative and progress against this and outcomes, are reported to Audit Committee on quarterly basis.

A corporate group is in place to review the Council's use of covert surveillance and to ensure compliance with the Regulatory of Investigatory Powers Act (2000).

Key Supporting Policies and Procedures	
Fraud Prevention Charter	<a href="#">Appendix 8(a) - Agenda for Audit Committee on Thursday, 12th March, 2020, 6.00 pm (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>
Anti-Money Laundering Policy	<a href="#">Appendix 5(a) - Agenda for Audit Committee on Thursday, 8th November, 2018, 6.00 pm (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>
Covert Surveillance Policy	<a href="#">Appendix 6(a) - Agenda for Audit Committee on Wednesday, 27th November, 2019, 6.00 pm (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>

## Scrutiny Arrangements

Three Scrutiny Committees are in place which reflect the Council's priorities namely a Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee, Tourism, Economy and Communities Scrutiny Committee and an Adults Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee. A Scrutiny Leadership Board chaired by an Independent Member of the Council and also consisting of the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the three committees and the Chair of the Audit Committee coordinates the work of the committees and manages the overall scrutiny work programme. In May 2021, the Council agreed that the Scrutiny Leadership Board would scrutinise the wholly owned companies of the Council, following liaison with the proposed Shareholder Committee of the Executive and would also be responsible for monitoring and commenting on the Council's, medium term financial strategy, financial outturn reports and any other overarching financial strategies. There are also regular meetings with Senior Executive Members.

These committees help empower elected members and provide them with the opportunity to contribute to policy making, hold in-depth reviews and challenge and hold decision makers to account. These Committees meet on a regular basis and the minutes of the meetings and supporting documentation are published.

Elected member feedback on the revised scrutiny process has been positive and they consider this now enables a more balanced approach to scrutiny across all political parties.

During the first 5 months of the pandemic, the scrutiny function was principally carried out by the Scrutiny Leadership Board. Guidance issued by the Centre for Public Scrutiny on the role of scrutiny during the pandemic, reiterated the need for scrutiny to continue during this time albeit in a reduced and more direct way. It was recognised that scrutiny remained a statutory function and an important element of the governance structure at

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the Council. The guidance recommended that the existing Committees and workplans be temporarily consolidated into one Committee which would have a substantive focus on oversight of the system response to Covid-19, use of the social care powers set out in the Coronavirus Act, the work to protect vulnerable children and the work of Public Health. In addition Children's Services Improvement was added to this remit to ensure continued scrutiny of progress following the Ofsted Inspection even at this time. The Scrutiny Leadership Board therefore undertook this role with this directed remit until after the summer recess.

## Key Supporting Policies and Procedures

Scrutiny Committee Agendas and Minutes

[Committee structure \(blackpool.gov.uk\)](https://blackpool.gov.uk/committees/scrutiny-committee)

## Learning and Development

An Induction and Probation process is in place for all new employees in the Council. Following successful completion of the probation process employees will then receive a mandatory Individual Performance Appraisal (IPA). The IPA incorporates an annual and interim review, held at an appropriate time in a private, comfortable space and can be considered as the setting of a 'roadmap' for an employee for the coming twelve months.

A wide range of training is available corporately which is informed from Corporate Leadership team, Senior Leadership team, various workforce groups and the development needs identified in the Individual Performance Appraisals. The Council is committed to leadership development and various courses are available to continue to develop skills and knowledge. An aspiring leadership programme has been delivered but further work is required in relation to succession planning for Senior Leadership Team roles and this will form part of HRs work plan for 2021/22. The attainment of professional qualifications in relevant disciplines is encouraged and the Council is committed to funding studies where appropriate utilising the Apprenticeship Levy.

Many professionals across the Council maintain continuing professional develop records to ensure they continue to meet the requirements of their professional bodies.

A Workforce Strategy is in place but was due to be refreshed last year. As a result of the pandemic this has been delayed but work will take place during 2021/22 supported by an imminent all employee survey which has recently been approved by the Corporate Leadership Team.

The Council encourages and promotes Apprenticeships to existing employees and through recruitment. The costs of training are funded through the Council's Apprenticeship Levy.

Project Search, the job scheme for young people with learning disabilities also ran for a third year where each of the students learn personal and job skills for a two month period before embarking on work placements to find a suitable job for them.

An induction programme is in place for all elected members. A three year development plan is in place for elected members which helps deliver training to help them fulfil their role. Elected members can have a personal development plan which helps to identify training needs.

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The Council takes the Health and Wellbeing of employees very seriously and there is a comprehensive suite of support available in addition to an in house Occupational Health Service. This is promoted to employees via regular newsletters and a 'My Wellbeing' section on the Council's Hub.

<b>Key Supporting Policies and Procedures</b>	
Apprenticeships Levy Return	<a href="https://blackpool.gov.uk">Annual apprenticeships return (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>
Workforce Strategy	<a href="https://blackpool.gov.uk">Appendix 3(a) - Agenda for Executive on Monday, 18th January, 2016, 6.00 pm (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>
Supporting The Workforce Scrutiny Report	<a href="https://blackpool.gov.uk">Appendix 10(a) - Agenda for Resilient Communities and Children's Scrutiny Committee on Thursday, 7th February, 2019, 6.00 pm (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>
Project Search	<a href="https://blackpool.gov.uk">Project Search (blackpool.gov.uk)</a>

## Partnerships and Joint Working

The Council is involved in a number of key projects with partner organisations in order to transform the way in which services are delivered. Examples include Better Start and HeadStart which focus on early intervention in order to build resilience in the community. Boards with representation from partner organisations are also in place for key risks faced by the Council to introduce an element of independence and challenge. Transformation is also been achieved through the Opportunity Area funding stream which seeks to improve educational attainment.

The Council is invited to attend the VCFSE Leaders meetings and aims to work alongside and in partnership with our third sector colleagues. This includes work around community engagement, community development and working together to ensure a more resilient Blackpool. This includes involving third sector representatives on key boards such as the town deal and working together on projects including a Lancashire wide accord developed in partnership with local authorities, NHS and the third sector, aiming to streamline communication pathways and join working together. The Council's relationships with the third / voluntary sector have been further strengthened due to effectively working together in response to the pandemic starting in March 2020 and forging new ways of working together which can continue to be developed.

Arrangements are in place for the provision of Shared Services with Fylde Borough Council in a number of areas, the most significant being the Revenues and Benefits Service and Human Resources. Shared arrangements are also in place with Blackpool Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust in relation to emergency planning. The Council is also working jointly with other Fylde Coast authorities on the development of an enterprise zone and other economic prosperity opportunities to improve the local economy.

The Council wholly owns 8 companies which are currently operating (7 companies limited by shares and 1 limited by guarantee). From a governance perspective each company has an adopted governance framework based on good practice codes in the corporate sector. The Boards generally comprise both councillor appointed non-executive directors and independent non-executive directors. The independent non-executive directors are in the majority. There is a group approach to corporate governance with the Company Secretary, Data Protection

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Officer and Head of Audit and Risk all appointed across the group which helps provide assurance to the various Boards of Directors and the Council in its role as shareholder.

In 2020/ 2021 the Council had a Shareholder’s Advisory Board, (comprised of 3 elected members) which acted in order to ensure that the duties and responsibilities of the Council as the sole shareholder of each company were exercised through the Company and to manage overall relationships between the Company and the Council. The Shareholder’s Advisory Board held regular meetings with nominated Company representatives in relation to the strategic performance of each Company, in particular the business plan objectives and long term development and in doing so to provide feedback to the shareholder (as appropriate) and to each company on behalf of the shareholder. It also sought assurance from each company on behalf of the shareholder, that there were appropriate controls in place for good governance and risk management matters. This was particularly relevant in 2020/ 2021 as a number of the companies had been affected by the pandemic and this liaison allowed the recovery plans for these companies to be monitored and supported by the Council. A review of the role of the shareholder was undertaken and it was recommended for 2021 onwards to have a Shareholder Committee of the Executive (chaired by the Deputy Leader of the Council and involving the Leader of the Council and the Deputy Leader of the Conservative group) with decision making powers and more focused accountability.

## Key Supporting Policies and Procedures

Shareholder’s Advisory Board Agenda and Minutes

[Committee details - Shareholder's Advisory Board \(blackpool.gov.uk\)](https://blackpool.gov.uk)

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## Annual Review of Effectiveness

Blackpool Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework, including the system of internal control. The stages included in the review process and the key findings from each are summarised below.

### Good Governance Group

A Good Governance Group was established in October 2016 and has led on the review of effectiveness and the production of the Annual Governance Statement to ensure that governance issues identified have subsequently been addressed. This group is chaired by the Director of Governance and Partnerships and attended by the Head of Audit and Risk, Head of Democratic Governance, Transformation Manager, Head of Legal Services, Head of ICT, Chief Accountant, Head of Information Governance and the Head of Organisation and Workforce Development.

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## **Elected Member Workshop**

A workshop with elected members from key committees including Audit Committee, Scrutiny Committee and the Executive took place on the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

## **Key Officer Consultation**

In addition to consultation with the Good Governance Group the Annual Governance Statement has also been considered by the Corporate Leadership Team.

## **Control Self-Assessment Questionnaire**

All Chief Officers were asked to complete a return making a self-assessment of the control environment in their directorates the outcome of which has been used to assist with the production of this document.

## **Review of 2020/21 Actions**

Appendix 1 provides an update in terms of the actions completed during 2020/21.

## **Mid-Term Review**

The mid-term review will be presented to the January 2022 Audit Committee so progress against identified actions can be reported.

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## **Assurance Statement**

The results of the effectiveness of the governance framework have been considered by the Corporate Leadership Team and Audit Committee who have determined that the arrangements are fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework.

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## **Governance Issues**

Actions have been identified as part of the 2020/21 review of the effectiveness of the governance framework and these are captured in the following table. It should be noted that some of the issues identified are not deemed significant but have been included to aid openness and transparency.

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Issue	Actions	Responsible Officer (s)	Target Date
<b>Code of Conduct and Behaviours</b>	A Governance Framework for the Council will be developed.	Director of Governance and Partnerships	Before mid-term review
	Details of refresher training for elected members will be provided in conjunction with the approval of the new Code of Conduct.	Director of Governance and Partnerships	After mid-term review
	Provide elected members with an up to date organisation structure detailing officer responsibility areas.	Director of Governance and Partnerships	After mid-term review
<b>Ethical and Responsible Governance</b>	A training course regarding applying the Public Sector Equality Duty to decision making should be developed and rolled out to officers and elected members.	Director of Resources	Before mid-term review.
	Develop an Ethical Policy clearly defining expectations of the wholly owned companies and the Shareholder and the decision making process.	Director of Governance and Partnerships	After mid-term review
	Produce an action plan setting out the roadmap to net zero as part of the climate change agenda for Blackpool.	Assistant Chief Executive and Director of Strategy	Before mid-term review
<b>Commitment to Openness, Communication and Consultation</b>	Continue to deliver the channel shift agenda to improve accessibility to residents and reduce demand on Council resources with a focus on helping with the recovery of Blackpool following the pandemic.	Director of Resources / Director of Communication and Regeneration	After mid-term review
	Implement a Community Engagement Strategy and supported guidance to ensure a coordinate and robust approach is in place building on the learning gained during responding to the current pandemic.	Director of Public Health	Before mid-term review

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Issue	Actions	Responsible Officer (s)	Target Date
	Consider the potential of developing a programme of potential schemes which would be ready should a funding stream become available. Where appropriate seek ways in which to better involve the community, businesses and the third sector in the development of this programme.	Corporate Leadership Team	After mid-term review
<b>Developing, Communicating and Translating the Vision</b>	Complete the review of the Council Plan to ensure that the impact of the pandemic is captured and ensure that Council strategies are reviewed in light of the pandemic and amended accordingly.	Assistant Chief Executive and Director of Strategy	Before mid-term review
	Consider ways in which to better involve elected members in the development of the Capital Strategy to ensure the mix of schemes not only focus on the economy but also improving our communities' wellbeing in residential areas.	Director of Communication and Regeneration / Director of Resources	After mid-term review
<b>Performance Management</b>	Ensure that the changes implemented as a result of the Ofsted Report on Children's Services are adequately embedded to drive performance improvements.	Director of Children's Services	After mid-term review
<b>Compliance with Relevant Laws, Regulations, Internal Policies and Procedures</b>	Implement the recommendations made by the ICO in their recent audit of the Council's Information Governance arrangements.	Director of Governance and Partnerships	Before mid-term review
<b>Financial Management</b>	Undertake a full review of the Council's Medium Term Financial Sustainability Strategy.	Director of Resources	Before mid-term review
<b>Audit Arrangements</b>	Continue to embed effective working relations with the Council's new external auditors.	Director of Resources	Before mid-term review

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Issue	Actions	Responsible Officer (s)	Target Date
	Participate in an external assessment of the adequacy of the internal audit services in terms of PSIAS compliance.	Director of Resources	Before mid-term review
	Opportunities to review good practice with other Audit Committees will be explored.	Director of Governance and Partnerships	After mid-term review
<b>Risk Management</b>	Undertake a project to assess the benefits of hybrid working when employees return to the office post pandemic.	Assistant Chief Executive / Director of Strategy and Performance	After mid-term review
<b>Learning and Development</b>	Undertake further work on succession planning for Senior Leadership Team roles.	Chief Executive	After mid-term review
	Use the findings from the staff survey to develop a new Workforce Development Strategy for the Council.	Chief Executive	After mid-term review
	Develop succession planning processes for elected members who are appointed to non-executive director roles at the wholly owned companies to enable a smooth transition.	Director of Governance and Partnerships	After mid-term review
	Review the role profiles of elected member position to include more guidance on what training courses, seminars and conferences would be beneficial as the roles develop year by year.	Director of Governance and Partnerships	After mid-term review
<b>Partnership and Joint Working</b>	Develop a Partnership Governance Framework setting out partnership governance principles and including a register of significant partnerships.	Director of Governance and Partnership	Before mid-term review

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Issue	Actions	Responsible Officer (s)	Target Date
	Continue to strengthen communication with and support for the business sector particularly in terms of recovery from the pandemic and seek to maximise the benefits from opportunities such as the Enterprise Zone.	Director of Communication and Regeneration	Before mid-term review
	Maximise the opportunity for digital literacy via the Fibre Blackpool project in order to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents.	Director of Resources	After mid-term review
	Implement a new Shareholder Committee to strengthen Shareholder Governance Arrangements with the Wholly Owned Companies.	Director of Governance and Partnership	Before mid-term review
	Review the training opportunities for Non-Executive Directors (including elected member appointments) on the wholly owned companies.	Director of Governance and Partnership	After mid-term review

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## Conclusion

We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the significant governance issues identified to further enhance governance arrangements. 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 and operation as part of our next annual review.

Signed: (Leader of the Council)

Signed: (Chief Executive)

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## Appendix 1 – Actions Completed in 2020/21

- Developed a Local Code of Governance document which brings together and summarises the Council's overall approach to corporate governance.
- Continued to deliver the web development plan ensuring that the Council adheres to the new accessibility requirements which are now law.
- Explored ways in which to improve communication with ward councillors so that they are aware of major developments in their areas.
- Identified ways in which data relating to the use of our green and blue spaces can be collated to help inform future decisions in relation to development of these areas.
- Delivered a thank you to all employees for the work that they have undertaken during the pandemic.
- The suite of Council Plan headline KPIs has been reviewed so that some of the measures around post-COVID recovery are incorporated into ongoing performance reporting. This review also looked to incorporate KPIs for a new corporate priority around organisational resilience, as recommended in the Corporate Peer Challenge which took place in March 2020.
- Continued the roll-out of Windows 10 incorporating training on how to work smarter using Office 365 and Microsoft Teams.
- Appointed to the vacant independent Audit Committee member post with two independent members now in place.
- The Audit Committee have sought assurance that systems of internal control have met the demands of the emergency response to Covid-19 and that where issues have been identified action has been taken to remedy these. This has been achieved through a series of 'deep-dive' reviews of pertinent strategic risk register items.
- Steps have been taken to ensure that the Council had robust arrangements in place in preparation for the UK's exit from the European Union.
- A process has been put in place to enable all elected members to attend the modular training delivered to specific Committees. Where training is delivered virtually then consideration is given to recording these sessions and make them available to all elected members.
- Continued to work in partnership with the Lancashire Resilience Forum to ensure a pan-Lancashire approach to dealing with the current pandemic including longer term impacts on economic, social and environmental sustainability.
- Data protection training was rolled out to staff who do not have IT access.
- The Council's Information Asset Register was updated.
- A programme of GDPR compliance audits to ensure continued compliance with GDPR has been implemented.