

Annual Governance Statement 2016/17

INTRODUCTION

1. This is Oxfordshire County Council's Annual Governance Statement for 2016/17. It provides:
 - An *opinion* on the Council's governance arrangements from the Council's senior managers and the leader of the Council
 - A review of the *effectiveness* of the Council's governance arrangements
 - A review of the *action plan* from last year's statement
 - An *action plan* for 2017/18
 - An *annex* summarising our governance framework
2. The Statement will be published on the Council's website and will also form part of the Council's Statement of Accounts. The Annual Governance Statement is required by Regulation 6(1) (b) of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015.
3. This statement covers all services including the Fire & Rescue Service. However the Fire & Rescue Service are required to produce a separate Statement of Assurance which will supplement this statement. A copy of the Fire and Rescue Service Annual Statement of Assurance for 2016/17 can also be found on our public website at:
<http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/oxfordshire-fire-and-rescue-service-performance>

STATEMENT OF OPINION

It is our opinion that the Council's governance arrangements in 2016/17 were sound and provide a robust platform for achieving the Council's priorities and challenges in 2017/18.

SIGNATURES

Signed on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council:

..... Date Date

Peter Clark
Chief Executive

Lorna Baxter
Chief Finance Officer

..... Date Date

Councillor Ian Hudspeth
Leader of the Council

Nicholas Graham
Monitoring Officer

APRIL 2017

SIGNIFICANT GOVERNANCE ISSUES

Progress in 2016/17

4. This is a review of the progress during 2016/17 on the priorities for that year:

Actions that were planned for 2016/17	Timescale, Responsible Officer, Monitoring Body	Progress	Status
<p>Staff supporting, managing and maintaining ICT systems and supplier relationships. Review to be carried out to identify how the systems are being managed and the effectiveness of the controls.</p>	<p>31 December 2016 Caroline Parker (ICT Information Services Manager) and Mike King, ICT Service Transformation Manager</p> <p>Corporate Governance Assurance Group (CGAG).</p>	<p>A review is being undertaken as part of the Business Efficiencies workstream within the Transformation Programme to identify staff, contracts and expenditure outside the control of ICT with the intention to consolidate within ICT.</p> <p>Updated timescale to 30 September 2017.</p>	<p>In progress</p>
<p>Data reporting and information governance by third party partners and suppliers of services</p> <p>Review to be carried out to verify that our data is being secured, maintained and reported in accordance with agreed service responsibilities.</p>	<p>31 October 2016 Caroline Parker (ICT Information Services Manager)</p> <p>CGAG</p>	<p>The suppliers of the priority 1 systems have been contacted and provided their data governance standards; these are being reviewed and actioned in line with item 3 below.</p> <p>Updated timescale to 31 March 2018.</p>	<p>In progress</p>
<p>Data quality, duplication and storage</p> <p>De-duplication of data collection and storage prior to migration of data ahead of decommissioning of Data</p>	<p>31 October 2016 Caroline Parker (ICT Information Services Manager)</p> <p>CGAG</p>	<p>The Managing Information Effectively proposal was approved at CCMT subject to some revision of timescales for data retention. This will be</p>	<p>In progress</p>

Actions that were planned for 2016/17	Timescale, Responsible Officer, Monitoring Body	Progress	Status
Centre; to include verification that commissioned/partnership services follow Council's data storage policies		<p>implemented as part of the Master Data Management initiative within the Transformation Programme.</p> <p>Updated timescale to 31 March 2018.</p>	
<p>Financial Control Improvement Plan</p> <p>Improve the clarity of financial roles, procedures and data issues and the oversight of financial controls – through implementation of a Financial Control Improvement Plan developed in consultation with stakeholders, partners, with the Financial Leadership Team.</p>	<p>31 March 2017 Ian Dyson, Assistant Chief Finance Officer</p> <p>CGAG</p>	<p>The Financial Control Improvement Plan has been incorporated into the Transformation Programme, under the Business Efficiencies workstream. Whilst the principles and key themes of the original plan remain, a strategic approach is being adopted in prioritising the improvements. Regular updates have been reported to the Audit Working Group and the Audit and Governance Committee.</p> <p>The key control improvements set out in the original plan have been completed, with the exception of the following: Financial guidance, procedures and regulations are still being updated and should be completed by the end of May</p>	<p>In progress (risk reduced)</p>

Actions that were planned for 2016/17	Timescale, Responsible Officer, Monitoring Body	Progress	Status
		2017; the automation of the bulk data upload procedure is on-going, implementation of the first automation is still at testing stage, but is due for completion end of April 2017.	
<p>Commercial Services Board (CSB)</p> <p>To strengthen/extend the role and effectiveness of the CSB (including the quality assurance/management information) through the action plans of the Gateway Review Panel, the Commercial Gateway Process and the work of the dedicated Corporate Procurement Lead.</p>	<p>31 March 2017 Ian Dyson, Assistant Chief Finance Officer</p> <p>CGAG</p>	<p>The development of the Commercial Services Board continues. The Gateway Review process is well established and has added value to the governance process; the Corporate Procurement Lead is providing the support to the Board, which is focussed on the implementation of the recently purchased contract management system. This system and the management information that will be available from it is fundamental to the future operation of the Board.</p>	<p>In Progress</p>
<p>Transformation</p> <p>Organisational transformation necessary during 2016/17 to meet the Council's plans, priorities</p>	<p>31 March 2017 Graham Shaw, Director of Customer Experience</p>	<p>A Board has been established to oversee the full transformation programme, chaired by the Director of</p>	<p>Completed</p>

Actions that were planned for 2016/17	Timescale, Responsible Officer, Monitoring Body	Progress	Status
<p>and challenges (including any changes to senior management structures), will put sound governance at the core – including effective consultation, and legal and constitutional compliance.</p>	<p>CGAG</p>	<p>Finance and with Cabinet representation which now meets monthly to ensure progress. The programme has been launched to ensure the Council is “Fit for the Future” with a working investment budget. Three work streams are now operational covering Digital Enablement, Business Efficiency and the Back Office, and the Property Portfolio. In addition, a dedicated Programme of work for Childrens Services will run alongside the 3 work streams. Each work stream has a Senior Management sponsor and dedicated resources and project plans. These plans feature a specific requirement for highlighting the governance implications of each strand. Regular briefings are being provided to Audit & Governance Committee. Monthly updates are now provided to the Council Leadership Team and from April</p>	

Actions that were planned for 2016/17	Timescale, Responsible Officer, Monitoring Body	Progress	Status
		<p>2017 to Cabinet.</p> <p>Additionally, the Corporate Governance Assurance Group will be monitoring the efficacy of those processes for recognising and addressing the governance issues.</p>	
<p>Health & Safety – repairs and maintenance (R&M) in schools To support schools (community, voluntary controlled, special and maintained nurseries) in the deployment of their delegated funding for R&M. To ensure compliance through the provision of information, training and effective monitoring procedures. Additional action will include schools completing a building maintenance annual return which will be collated as part of the schools H&S Monitoring visit and used to monitor statutory compliance. Completed returns will be feedback to Property and Facilities for review and action.</p>	<p>Paul Lundy, County Health and Safety Manager</p> <p>CGAG</p>	<p>To gain greater assurance that schools are meeting their delegated responsibilities, Property and Facilities have instigated an ongoing programme of premises visits to monitor compliance and performance and to inspect repairs and maintenance items.</p> <p>Carillion continue to offer compliance services to schools although only a small number of schools buy back since the majority appear to prefer to use their own local contractors.</p> <p>The Council continues to offer a traded H&S service</p>	<p>Completed</p>

Actions that were planned for 2016/17	Timescale, Responsible Officer, Monitoring Body	Progress	Status
		<p>to schools which includes monitoring of H&S management.</p> <p>In addition schools can access training including Health and Safety for Managers, Asbestos Awareness, Legionella Awareness etc.</p>	
<p>Corporate Security</p> <p>Implement actions to ensure the ongoing security of the Council's buildings, principally those with public access.</p>	<p>31 March 2017 Alexandra Bailey, Director: Property, Assets & Investments.</p> <p>CGAG</p>	<p>Good organisational security as a whole comprises personal, physical and information security. Personal security is maintained within Human Resources and strong vetting and recruitment procedures. Information security is maintained within Information Governance. This action primarily focused on achieving sustainable governance arrangements for overseeing physical security, as applied to our Council buildings and in particular our public-facing environment, including access and perimeter security.</p> <p>The key governance outcome has been to secure corporate</p>	<p>Completed</p>

Actions that were planned for 2016/17	Timescale, Responsible Officer, Monitoring Body	Progress	Status
		<p>oversight of the Council's corporate security – entailing the development, into 2017/18, of a set of actions to improve/maintain security. This oversight also allows effective link-up with other strands of security such as data and information technology.</p> <p>A Corporate Security lead has been established as part of the senior management team. This is Alexandra Bailey, Director: Property, Assets & Investments.</p>	

Action Plan for 2017/18

5. This is an Action Plan of particular governance priorities that the Council will address during 2017/18.

	Action now planned for 2017/18	Timescale for Completion	Responsible Officer	Monitoring Body
1	<p>Business Continuity (BC): Risk relating to key contractor/partner provision (supply chain management), especially where “BAU” already significantly impacts our resource/capacity:</p> <p>supply disrupted protracted recovery provider failure / withdrawal</p> <p>Proposed action: Where key partners / contracts e.g. IBC, Carillion, Skanska may suffer business disruption, promote further work to identify OCC vulnerability and mitigations. Seek BC exercise with key partners around supply disruption, i.e. fuel supply</p>	December 2017	<p>Business Continuity & Resilience Officer</p> <p>Assistant Chief Fire Officer (as Chair of Business Continuity Steering Group)</p>	CGAG

	Action now planned for 2017/18	Timescale for Completion	Responsible Officer	Monitoring Body
2	<p>Business Continuity: Risks relating to organisational structure change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Management Review • subsequent service reorganisation • agile working. <p>Proposed action: Following the Senior Management Review: a) refresh continuity priorities and vulnerabilities with key service continuity requirements i.e. through BIA b) provide training and exercise in major incident response for significant disruption (e.g. loss of site), managing agile pros/cons c) through senior management engagement ensure BC in subsequent reorganisation at service and team levels, including adaptation to agile.</p>	<p>December 2017 = key service prioritisation, strategic training and exercising</p> <p>March 2018 = embedding business continuity</p>	<p>Business Continuity & Resilience Officer</p> <p>& Assistant Chief Fire Officer (as Chair of Business Continuity Steering Group)</p>	CGAG
3.	<p>Corporate Security Implement a programme of actions to integrate and strengthen corporate security of the Council's buildings and essential infrastructure</p>	March 2018	Director of Property and Investment	CGAG

	Action now planned for 2017/18	Timescale for Completion	Responsible Officer	Monitoring Body
4	Finance Develop, implement and operate a robust debt management strategy, providing clarity over the standards and process for the effective collection of income.	31 December 2017	Assistant Chief Finance Officer	Finance Leadership Team
5	Mental Health Address the governance issues arising from the Internal Audit of Mental Health undertaken as part of the 2016/17 Internal Audit plan.	30 September 2017	Seona Douglas, Deputy Director, Adult Social Care.	Adult Social Care Leadership Team
6	Capital Programme Address the governance issues arising from the Internal Audit of the Capital Programme undertaken as part of the 2016/17 Internal Audit Plan.	30 September 2017	Bev Hindle, Strategic Director of Communities / Lorna Baxter, Director of Finance	CGAG
7	Target Operating Model To develop a supporting governance framework in the context of delivering the Better Oxfordshire proposal.	30 September 2017	Maggie Scott, Assistant Chief Executive & Nick Graham, Director of Law and Governance	Council Leadership Team (CLT)

REVIEWING OUR EFFECTIVENESS

6. We have reviewed our overall effectiveness. Key points are that:
 - We have made significant progress on implementing our Action Plan for 2016/17 as noted above;
 - Our decision taking processes are clear;
 - Key management roles have continued to be defined and to operate as part of the council's leadership team - Head of Paid Service, Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer and Chief Internal Auditor;
 - A senior management review has been completed , achieving a County Leadership Team that can better deliver good governance for the council's direction of travel and challenges;
 - The council operates within a budget that included a low council tax increase, and delivers year on year savings despite significant financial pressures.
 - Financial management systems and processes are subject to regular review and actions taken where areas for improvement are identified to ensure good value for money is achieved.
 - We monitored key governance issues through a system of Corporate Lead Officers reporting into a Corporate Governance Assurance Group of senior officers and to the council's Audit & Governance Committee,
 - Through the governance assurance framework, issues and unacceptable risk exposures are being highlighted with action plans devised and implementation monitored on a timely basis. This will ensure that the level of risk is returned to acceptable levels as soon as possible.
7. Thus we consider that our governance arrangements are in sound shape given the pressures, scale of change and uncertainty about funding and future structures. The continuing and new plans to improve our governance in 2017/18 will now be our main focus for the year ahead.

Measuring and Managing Service Performance

8. Oxfordshire County Council has used a performance management framework, centred on quarterly reporting and an exception based escalation of issues. Priorities are identified in the Corporate Plan and related performance indicators are agreed with directorates, as part of the service and resource planning process. Progress is reported by the use of dashboards with Red, Amber or Green (RAG) ratings.
9. Accountability for performance runs from the individual to corporate level through directorate leadership teams and then on to the County Council Leadership Team (CLT). Public reports are made to Performance Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet. Performance Scrutiny Committee met 10 times in 2016/17 to consider performance across the Council focusing on a directorate in detail at each meeting. The Committee can call for additional reports from directors and examine issues in detail to ensure that improvements are made. The Committee also challenges proposed indicators and targets to ensure they are realistic and in line with strategic priorities.

Compliance, Risks and Complaints & Whistleblowing

Compliance

10. Oxfordshire County Council has used a range of measures to ensure compliance with established policies, procedures, laws and regulations including:

- Notification of changes in the law, regulations and practice to directorates by Legal Officers;
- Training carried out by Legal Officers and external experts;
- The drawing up and circulation of guidance and advice on key procedures, policies and practices;
- Proactive monitoring of compliance by relevant key officers including the Chief Finance Officer, the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Internal Auditor;
- A Corporate Governance Strategy for Law and Governance ; and a
- 'Protocol for Implementing New Legislation' ensures that there are Directorate Leads who have a specific obligation to ensure appropriate dissemination of legal, policy and professional information within their Directorates.

11. Guidance and advice on all our key policies and procedures have been reviewed and updated. All policies and guidance have been given visibility on the Intranet within the Corporate Governance Library as well as separate pages for Human Resources and Finance, Budgets and Procurement.

12. Compliance with our policies was monitored by the relevant corporate lead officers. Their assessment was incorporated in the year end 'Certificate of assurance' signed off by each corporate lead officer.

13. Under Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Monitoring Officer is required to report to the County Council where, in his opinion, a proposal, decision or omission by the County Council, its Members or Officers is or is likely to be unlawful and also to report on any investigation by the Local Government Ombudsman. The Monitoring Officer issued a formal report in the year 2016/17 in relation to an adult social care complaint investigated by the Council and the Local Government Ombudsman. The report can be found here:

<http://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=116&MID=4814>

14. The complaint had originated in 2014/15 and the Council had proactively undertaken actions to resolve matters. This was acknowledged by the Ombudsman, at the conclusion of her investigation, who said: "I welcome the significant steps Oxfordshire council has already taken to improve its policies,

procedures and staff training in this area and am pleased it has agreed to my further recommendations.”

15. The Monitoring Officer undertakes a review of the County Council’s annual governance arrangements. This review was formally reported to the Audit & Governance Committee.

Risks

16. Oxfordshire County Council has a Risk Management Strategy which aims to ensure that there is continuous improvement in the arrangements for managing risk across all directorates. The Chief Finance Officer was the CLT Risk Champion during 2016/17.
17. Oxfordshire County Council has in place a process for identifying, assessing, managing and reviewing the key areas of risk that could impact on the achievement of County Council’s objectives and service priorities. Reports to committees to support key policy decisions or major projects include an assessment of both opportunities and risks.
18. A strategic risk register is in place that is owned and reviewed by CLT. Service Risk Registers were owned and reviewed by each Deputy Director with their management teams and the Director on a quarterly basis. An escalation process is in place to report significant service risks to CLT as part of the quarterly performance reporting process and separately to the Audit Working Group. The Strategic Risk register has been updated in 2016/17 and each risk is owned by a member of CLT. CLT reviews the risk register quarterly.
19. Risk Management in projects is required in our Corporate Project Management Framework. It includes the requirement for risk registers to be maintained as part of the project management process.

Complaints & Whistleblowing

20. Oxfordshire County Council has continued to operate formal complaints and whistleblowing procedures which has allowed staff, service users, contractors, suppliers and the public to confidentially raise concerns about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of staff, elected councillors or other people acting on behalf of the Council.
21. An annual review of reports and incidents of whistleblowing was undertaken by the Monitoring Officer and reported to the Audit & Governance Committee via the report of the Audit Working Group.

Internal audit

22. In 2010 CIPFA issued a Statement on the “Role of the Head of Internal Audit in public service organisations”. This outlines the principles that define the core activities and behaviours that belong to the role of the ‘Head of Internal Audit’ and the governance requirements needed to support them. The Council’s

arrangements conform with the governance requirements of the CIPFA statement as our Chief Internal Auditor:

- Objectively assesses the adequacy of governance and management of existing risks, commenting on responses to emerging risks and proposed developments;
- Gives an objective and evidence based opinion on all aspects of governance, risk management and internal control;
- Is a Senior Manager with regular and open engagement across the organisation, including the Leadership Team and the Audit & Governance Committee; and
- Leads and directs an internal audit service that is resourced to be fit for purpose; and is professionally qualified and suitably experienced.

23. The Monitoring Officer sought feedback on the quality and effectiveness of the Internal Audit Service from Senior Managers across the council, reporting back to the Audit and Governance Committee. The conclusion from the survey was that management find the internal audit service effective in fulfilling its role.

24. The Internal Audit Service operates in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS). The annual self-assessment against the standards is completed on an annual basis and was last completed in May 2016. The areas of non-conformance highlighted for 2015/16 have now been addressed; the Internal Audit Charter is now in place and subject to annual review and approval by the Audit & Governance Committee, there is now a Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme in place and the Internal Audit Procedures Manual has now been reviewed and updated.

25. It is a requirement of the PSIAS for an external assessment of internal audit to be completed at least every five years. This must be completed by 31 March 2018 and therefore will need to be commissioned during 2017/18. The results will be reported back to the Audit & Governance Committee.

26. The Chief Internal Auditor prepared an Annual Report on the work of Internal Audit which concludes reasonable assurance over Oxfordshire County Council's system of internal control. This demonstrates improvement from last year when the overall Chief Internal Auditor's opinion was qualified assurance over Oxfordshire County Council's system of internal control. This was due to a small number of limited assurance reports issued by Internal Audit in relation to key financial systems. Follow up work completed during 2016/17 has evidenced sufficient improvements in the financial control environment to enable the overall opinion to be reflected as such.

27. Where Internal Audit identifies areas for improvement, management action plans are in place and are routinely monitored by the Internal Audit team and the Audit Working Group. Managers are required to provide positive assurance that actions have been implemented; performance on implementation is high, demonstrating that control weaknesses identified by Internal Audit are being addressed on a timely basis.

Checking the Effectiveness of our Governance

28. Oxfordshire County 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 has been informed by the work of the senior managers within the County Council who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Chief Internal Auditor's annual report, whistleblowing reports and comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

Audit & Governance Committee

29. The Chairman of our Audit & Governance Committee produced an Annual Report to Council. The Annual Report also covers the work of the Audit Working Group. This group has met regularly throughout the year and reviewed specific areas of governance, risk and control, reporting any significant issues identified to the Committee.

Scrutiny Committees

30. Oxfordshire County Council has three scrutiny committees. They cover the following areas:
- Education;
 - Performance;
 - Joint Health Overview including district council and co-opted lay members

The good governance of the council has been further enhanced by the work of the Cabinet Advisory Groups. These groups can be set up to examine topics selected by Cabinet which align to corporate council priorities.

31. CIPFA guidance indicated that Audit Committees '*should have clear reporting lines and rights of access to... for example scrutiny committees*'. The Chairman of the Performance Scrutiny Committee has had a standing invitation to attend our Audit & Governance Committee to provide advice in relation to the work of the Scrutiny Committees. Similarly, the Chairman of Audit & Governance Committee has a reciprocal standing invitation to attend the meetings of the Performance Scrutiny Committee. An annual report on the key achievements of all Scrutiny Committees is considered by our Audit & Governance Committee in draft and submitted for agreement by Council. Scrutiny and Audit Committee Chairmen meet regularly to coordinate their work and forward plans.

Corporate Governance Assurance Group (CGAG)

32. This Group has monitored the corporate governance framework. It reviewed the Annual Governance Statement action plan, as well as monitoring and challenging the assurance framework owned by designated Corporate Leads. The Group identified and considered weaknesses in the internal control environment. It has primary responsibility for collating all of the evidence and producing the first draft of the Annual Governance Statement. No

recommendations for improvements were made by the external auditors (Ernst and Young LLP) relating to the 2016/17 Annual Governance Statement. .

Key Deliverables

33. Updates on projects are reported quarterly, with information reported through existing quarterly business management (performance/risk/projects) reporting procedures. The forecast financial position is reported monthly to Leadership Teams and through the regular Financial Monitoring and Business Strategy Delivery Reports to Cabinet which are considered by the County Council Management Team.
34. Further to these monitoring arrangements, the Chief Finance Officer and the Head of Policy meet with all Deputy Directors. They review the delivery of budget savings, check progress on the delivery of projects and ensure that support is targeted to projects as necessary. The policy and finance teams work with service areas to monitor delivery of agreed savings and escalate issues for consideration to CCMT as required.

Other external reviews

35. Oxfordshire County Council receives external reports and inspections from a range of sources that can provide assurance or indicate any issues related to internal control and governance. These are generally ad-hoc and are reported to CGAG by the Head of Policy so that governance issues can be reported to Audit & Governance Committee. For completeness Directors are also asked to set out feedback from external reviews in their annual Statement of Assurance.

ANNEX

SUMMARY OF OUR GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

A vision for Oxfordshire

1. Oxfordshire County Council's ambition, as set out in the updated [2016/17 – 2019/20 Corporate Plan](#), is for a county where local residents and businesses can flourish - a Thriving Oxfordshire.
2. In 2016/17 our Corporate Plan was supported by Directorate Business Strategies which set out how the work will be delivered.

Equalities

3. Oxfordshire County Council is committed to making Oxfordshire a fair and equal place in which to live, work and visit. We want our services to effectively meet the needs of all local residents, including those in rural areas and areas of deprivation. We also aim to ensure that our staff are equipped with the knowledge and skills to meet the diverse needs of customers, that our services are accessible, and to encourage supportive and cohesive communities through our service delivery.

Consultation and Communication

4. The council ensures it meets its statutory consultation duty by using a consistent approach to consulting service users and other stakeholders about proposed service change.
5. We also have well established consultation and involvement arrangements to specifically engage the community and its staff. There is a council-wide Consultation & Involvement Strategy, a research governance framework covering consultation, evaluation and research with adult social care customers and a dedicated engagement team working with children and young people and vulnerable adults.

Decision making structures

6. Oxfordshire County Council's Constitution sets out the roles of and relationships between the full Council, the Cabinet, Scrutiny and other Committees in the budget setting and policy and decision making processes. It notes the legal requirements. The County Council's Corporate Plan supplements our Policy Framework. These formal policies are approved by full Council in accordance with the provisions of Oxfordshire County Council's Constitution.
7. The Constitution also sets out a scheme of delegation. The Chief Finance Officer approves the financial scheme and the Monitoring Officer approves the

decision making scheme. The Constitution also records what responsibility each Oxfordshire County Council body or individual delegate (councillor or officer) has for particular types of decisions or areas or functions. The Constitution requires that all decisions taken by or on behalf of the County Council are made in accordance with given principles.

8. The Constitution also sets out how the public can take part in the decision making process. The Cabinet's Forward Plan alerts the public to what business the Cabinet will be undertaking to give members of the public the right to make representations before a decision is taken. Some of the responsibilities of the County Council committees require statutory consultation to precede a decision being taken.
9. The Constitution is reviewed annually by the Monitoring Officer with recommendations of changes being made to Full Council for consideration and adoption.
10. Oxfordshire County Council has an Audit & Governance Committee which operates in accordance with the CIPFA guidance 2013 and normally meets six times a year. The County Council also operates an Audit Working Group, made up of members of the Committee and Senior Officers, chaired by a co-opted member of the Audit & Governance Committee. The Audit Working Group looks in detail at specific areas of governance, risk or control under the direction of the Audit & Governance Committee.
11. The Monitoring Officer monitors and reviews the operation of the Constitution to ensure that its aims, principles and requirements are given full effect and makes recommendations on any necessary amendments to it to Full Council.

Senior Management

12. The Chief Executive (as Head of Paid Service) is responsible for co-ordinating the different functions of the council, staff appointment, organisation, management, numbers and grades. Additional responsibilities are set out in the Constitution include supporting councillors and the democratic process, overall corporate management and promoting our objectives, performance management, strategic partnership, the community strategy, media and communications.
13. Our Chief Finance Officer holds the statutory role of 'Chief Financial Officer' within the Council. Our Chief Finance Officer is professionally qualified and suitably experienced.
14. The Financial Procedure Rules are part of the Constitution and are published on the Council's website. These 'Rules' and the supporting Financial Regulations are reviewed by the Chief Finance Officer. Schemes of Financial Delegation and Delegation of Powers are reviewed and updated twice a year.
15. Oxfordshire has a Chief Legal Officer who is the Monitoring Officer. His role, in summary, includes meeting all legal requirements, ensuring effective

administration and compliance with statutory responsibilities around the councillors code of conduct and the ethical standards of officers.

Controls on Information, Projects and ICT

16. Our Information Governance Group reviews and implements corporate policies, including the new Information Governance Policy, the Data Sharing Policy and new tools and methods of work evaluated by ICT Business Delivery to improve the security of data transfer.
17. Oxfordshire County Council requires projects to be managed using their Project Management Framework which gives a comprehensive structure, standard paperwork and defined processes. Progress of Major Programmes is reported to DLTs and to the Delivery Board, and the Head of Paid Service.

Codes of Conduct

18. Oxfordshire County Council has developed and adopted separate Codes of Conduct for Councillors and Officers; both Codes define the standards of behaviour expected by the County Council and the duty owed to the public. Training on the requirements of the codes is provided by the Council's Monitoring Officer for both Councillors and Officers. Both codes form part of the County Council's Constitution and are readily accessible via the council's Internet and Intranet websites.
19. Each Council must adopt a local Code of Conduct and have arrangements in place to investigate complaints made against Members. Our Council has agreed to include standards within the terms of reference of the Audit & Governance Committee.

WORKING WITH OTHERS

Schools

20. Section 48 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998 requires the authority to prepare a scheme setting out the financial framework for local authority maintained schools, known as the Scheme for Financing Schools.
21. It is the responsibility of each school's governing body to set down and oversee proper governance arrangements for the school. The governing body in maintained schools is accountable to the local authority for the way the school is run.
22. Academies are legally separate entities and therefore their effective governance does not fall within the control or responsibilities of the County Council. The County Council retains responsibilities including ensuring that special educational needs are met, safeguarding, and that the free entitlement to early year's education is provided by academies where applicable.

Partnerships

23. Oxfordshire County Council works together with other bodies and organisations, in a number of different partnerships governed by specific terms of reference. Overall accountability for partnership working rests with Council which is responsible for examining formal and informal feedback mechanisms. Each partnership presents an annual report and a yearly summary of the work of the partnerships set out below is discussed at the September meeting of the County Council. This is also considered by Performance Scrutiny Committee.

24. The key partnerships that Oxfordshire County Council is part of and plays a formal role in are:

- Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP)
- Oxfordshire Skills Board
- Oxfordshire Growth Board
- Oxfordshire Local Transport Board.
- Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB),
- Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board
- Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board Oxfordshire Stronger Communities Alliance Oxfordshire Safer Communities Partnership

Overview of Corporate Governance Assurance Framework

