

Annual Governance Statement 2017/18

INTRODUCTION

1. This is Oxfordshire County Council's Annual Governance Statement for 2017/18. 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 *conclusion* in relation to the effectiveness
 - A review of the *action plan* from last year's statement
 - An *action plan for 2018/19*
 - 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. 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 2017/18 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 2017/18 were sound and provide a robust platform for achieving the Council's priorities and challenges in 2018/19.

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 2018

SIGNIFICANT GOVERNANCE ISSUES

Progress in 2017/18

3. This is a review of the progress during 2017/18 on the priorities for that year:

Actions that were planned for 2017/18	Timescale, Responsible Officer, Monitoring Body	Progress	Status
<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>	<p>Business Continuity & Resilience Officer</p> <p>Assistant Chief Fire Officer (as Chair of Business Continuity Steering Group)</p> <p>December 2017</p> <p>Corporate Governance Assurance Group (CGAG)</p>	<p>Recruitment of new Business Continuity manager (commencing March 2018)</p> <p>Supply Chain Business Continuity workshop planned for 2018</p> <p>Further Hydra exercises planned for 2018 in April</p> <p>Remaining actions prioritised for review by new BC Manager in Quarter 1 2018/19</p>	<p>In progress (risk reduced)</p>
<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</p>	<p>Business Continuity & Resilience Officer</p> <p>&</p> <p>Assistant Chief Fire Officer (as Chair of Business Continuity Steering</p>	<p>Actions prioritised for review by new BC Manager in Quarter 1 2018/19</p>	<p>In progress (risk reduced)</p>

Actions that were planned for 2017/18	Timescale, Responsible Officer, Monitoring Body	Progress	Status
<p>priorities and vulnerabilities with key service continuity requirements i.e. through BIA</p> <p>b) provide training and exercise in major incident response for significant disruption (e.g. loss of site), managing agile pros/cons</p> <p>c) through senior management engagement ensure BC in subsequent reorganisation at service and team levels, including adaptation to agile.</p>	<p>Group</p> <p>December 2017 = key service prioritisation, strategic training and exercising</p> <p>March 2018 = embedding business continuity</p> <p>CGAG</p>		
<p>Corporate Security</p> <p>Implement a programme of actions to integrate and strengthen corporate security of the Council's buildings and essential infrastructure</p> <p>.</p>	<p>Director for Property and Investment</p> <p>March 2018</p> <p>CGAG</p>	<p>TBC:</p> <p>Activities continued to build and test the council's corporate security (e.g. enhanced ID badge arrangements and enforcement; installation of the bollards at the entrance to County Hall; test exercises on in-building security; cyber security measures</p>	<p>TBC</p> <p>In progress (risk reduced)</p>
<p>Finance</p> <p>Develop, implement and operate a robust debt management strategy, providing clarity over the standards and process for the effective collection of income</p>	<p>Assistant Chief Finance Officer</p> <p>31 December 2017</p> <p>Finance Leadership Team</p>	<p>The process has been reviewed and is subject to regular monitoring. The overarching strategy remains outstanding. The strategy will be developed next year but following the outcomes of the</p>	<p>In progress (risk reduced)</p>

Actions that were planned for 2017/18	Timescale, Responsible Officer, Monitoring Body	Progress	Status
		Operating Model and the Financial Management Review.	
<p>Mental Health Address the governance issues arising from the Internal Audit of Mental Health undertaken as part of the 2016/17 Internal Audit plan.</p>	<p>Deputy Director, Adult Social Care</p> <p>30 September 2017</p> <p>Adult Social Care Leadership Team</p>	<p>Follow up audit completed March 2018.</p> <p>A third of the actions from the original audit have been implemented, with the remaining still outstanding or have been replaced with new actions.</p>	<p>In progress (risk reduced) but Carried forward to next year's Action Plan for further monitoring</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>Strategic Director of Communities/ Director of Finance</p> <p>30 September 2017</p> <p>CGAG</p>	<p>Governance has been reviewed and a new structure in place i.e. the Capital Investment Programme Board.</p>	<p>Completed</p>
<p>Target Operating Model To develop a supporting governance framework in the context of delivering the Better Oxfordshire proposal.</p>	<p>Assistant Chief Executive</p> <p>30 September 2017</p> <p>CLT (County Leadership Team)</p>	<p>The Better Oxfordshire proposal was submitted to the Secretary of State during 2017/18 and remains with him for any decision in future.</p> <p>The Council chose to continue the momentum towards a sustainable operating model under the <i>Fit for the</i></p>	<p>Completed</p>

Actions that were planned for 2017/18	Timescale, Responsible Officer, Monitoring Body	Progress	Status
		<p><i>Future programme.</i></p> <p>A full project-managed <i>Fit for the Future</i> Programme, with support and challenge from PwC and with strands led by senior managers fully overseen by a strategic-level Board with five cross-cutting working groups feeding in to it. The programme is in place and now fully under way.</p>	

Action Plan for 2018/19

4. This is an Action Plan of particular governance priorities that the Council will address during 2018/19.

	Action now planned for 2018/19	Timescale for Completion	Responsible Officer	Monitoring Body
1	<p>Mental Health:</p> <p>Carry out the remaining governance actions identified in the follow-up audit (March 2018)</p>	March 2019	Deputy Director, Adult Social Care	Adult Social Care Leadership Team
2	<p>General Data Protection Regulations:</p> <p>Action plan for ensuring compliance with the incoming GDPRs – including policy review, organisational awareness.</p> <p>Action plan for reviewing and monitoring ongoing compliance</p>	<p>May 2018</p> <p>March 2019</p>	Director for Law and Governance	CGAG
3.	<p>Fit for the Future Programme</p> <p>Implementation of the <i>Fit for the Future Programme</i> under sound project governance and to explore/feature governance as a key layer of the new Target Operating Model</p>	<p>July 2018 – decision making on preferred target operating model</p> <p>July 2018 – March 2019: implementation of the planned two-year delivery of the model</p>	Assistant Chief Executive	Fit for the Future Board

	Action now planned for 2018/19	Timescale for Completion	Responsible Officer	Monitoring Body
4	<p>Corporate Security:</p> <p>Early appointment of designated project lead to drive a planned series of activity to build and test the Council's corporate security.</p> <p>Delivery of the planned programme.</p>	<p>May 2018</p> <p>May 2018 – March 2019</p>	<p>Director of Property and Investment & Chief Fire Officer & Director of Law and Governance</p>	<p>County Council Leadership Team</p>
5	<p>Financial Management:</p> <p>Deliver a detailed refresh of the assurance framework to ensure its effectiveness; and to follow through the 'case for change' under the Fit for the Future Programme in respect of streamlining systems and processes.;</p>	<p>April 2018 – March 2019</p>	<p>Assistant Chief Finance Officer</p>	<p>Finance Leadership Team</p>

	Action now planned for 2018/19	Timescale for Completion	Responsible Officer	Monitoring Body
6	<p>Property:</p> <p>Deliver property compliance project to review, monitor and prioritise via Key Performance Indicators. And, particularly in the post-Carillion environment, this will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a refresh, and strengthening, of systems for the assessment and tracking of health and safety risks across the Council's property and within schools • a refreshed approach to the effective use and management of the Council's properties 	April 2018 – March 2019	Strategic Compliance Manager	County Council Leadership Team
7	<p>External Reports</p> <p>Implement a robust and effective mechanism for the co-ordination and consideration of, and action plans for implementing, any governance issues arising from External Reports about the Council and its performance.</p>	December 2018	Assistant Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer	Corporate Governance Assurance Group

	Action now planned for 2018/19	Timescale for Completion	Responsible Officer	Monitoring Body
8.	<p>Procurement:</p> <p>As part of the new Target Operating Model for the Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop/implement a refreshed Procurement Strategy and Policy • develop and deploy the electronic Contract Management Systems (eCMS) • refresh contract management skills within the new Model 	<p>August 2018</p> <p>Jan 2019</p> <p>Aug – Dec 2018</p>	<p>Head of Procurement and Commercial</p> <p>Head of Procurement and Commercial</p> <p>Fit for the Future Transformation Leads for the Procurement and Head of Procurement and Commercial</p>	<p>Fit for the Future Transformation Board</p> <p>Fit for the Future Transformation Board</p> <p>Fit for the Future Transformation Board/Corporate Governance Assurance Group</p>

REVIEWING OUR EFFECTIVENESS

5. We have reviewed our overall effectiveness. Key points are that:
 - We have made progress on implementing our Action Plan for 2017/18 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.

6. The effectiveness of the Council's governance has been further demonstrated by the Council's active project-planning to meet in-year governance issues. For instance:
 - The May 2017 full County Council elections were successfully held in compliance with electoral legislation and good practice (including project inspection) by the Electoral Commission; a full induction programme for councillors was implemented and members appointments to Cabinet and Committees duly made. Together, this ensured robust and seamless decision-making governance
 - During 2017/18 the Council laid clear, managed and communicated plans for dealing with governance issues arising from:
 - An in-year council decision to review the Council's political decision-making structures: consisting of a duly appointed cross-party working group to work through the various legal options, precedents and best practice, including direct consultation with councillors, liaison with specialist agencies (e.g. Local Government Association and Centre for Public Scrutiny) and visits to other authorities.
 - Active groundwork and preparation for the commencement of the General Data Protection Regulations: with a specifically tasked and resourced team, project plan, communication plan and actions to ensure organisational awareness and compliance; including networking with other authorities in the south east; and planned work with elected members; together with a full review of the Council's information assets and governance policies to ensure consistency with the incoming Data

Protection Act. The designation of a 'Data Protection Officer' will also feature.

7. Two further significant actions took place in-year which demonstrated the Council's approach to good governance and effective actions and interventions:

i. Planned and managed arrangements for decoupling from Carillion contract(s) even before the collapse of Carillion:

- The Council had already begun a managed withdrawal for its Carillion contracts and so was in a good position to act more swiftly following the collapse of the company
- The Council successfully managed its governance processes to:
 - Transfer 271 staff to the Council, without incident (400 in total, many of these transferred to academies), with all receiving uninterrupted pay
 - Taking over the supply chains and sub-contracts Carillion held for the delivery of Catering and Cleaning, ensuring uninterrupted service across the estate
 - Beginning to establish a baseline as regards property, construction and estate to enable an effective assessment and prioritisation of works.
 -

ii. The commencement of the Council's key change initiative, the *Fit for the Future* programme: this represents the Council's determination to develop an operating model which can fit the Council for the challenges ahead, which puts service delivery front and centre and which achieves better direction of the Council's resources, customer experience and digital offering. With assistance and challenge from consultants PwC, and engagement with staff, the Council has devised a targeted programme of activity, overseen by a Fit for the Future Board of senior managers: consistent of a set of work-programmes or layers, the governance of the project has been fully considered; and the project itself has a dedicated workstream to ensure that any resulting operating model has effective governance built-in from the outset. The furtherance of this project forms part of the Action Plan of this

Conclusion

9. We consider that our governance arrangements are in sound shape, and have been demonstrably sufficient to meet the pressures, scale of change and challenges arising during the year.

Statement for 2018/19.

Measuring and Managing Service Performance

10. 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.

11. 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 7 times in 2017/18 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

12. 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;
 - Induction training for officers and managers on key governance responsibilities
 - Specific 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;
 - '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.
13. Guidance and advice on all our key policies and procedures are reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis. 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 and news items
14. 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.

15. 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. No such reports have been necessary in 2017/18:
16. The Monitoring Officer undertakes a review of the County Council's annual governance arrangements. This review was formally reported to, and endorsed by, the Audit & Governance Committee in September 2017.

Risks

17. 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 2017/18.
18. 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.
19. 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 2017/18 and each risk is owned by a member of CLT. CLT reviews the risk register quarterly.
20. 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

21. 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.
22. 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

23. 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.
24. 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.
25. 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. It is a requirement of the PSIAS for an external assessment of internal audit to be completed at least every five years. This was required by 31 March 2018 and took place in November 2017 and the results were reported to the Audit & Governance Committee in January 2018. This confirmed that the “service is highly regarded within the Council and provides useful assurance on its underlying systems and processes” Minor improvements required have been addressed
26. The Chief Internal Auditor prepared an Annual Report on the work of Internal Audit which concludes for the 12 months ended 31 March 2018, there is **satisfactory** assurance regarding Oxfordshire County Council’s overall control environment and the arrangements for governance, risk management and control. Where weaknesses have been identified through internal audit review, they have worked with management to agree appropriate corrective action and timescale for improvement.
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. A report on the effectiveness of Internal Audit was received and endorsed by the Audit & Governance Committee in July 2017.

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. The Chairman's report was considered and endorsed by Full Council in July 2017.

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. Full Council considered the annual report of scrutiny committees in May 2017. 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 continues to identify, challenge and track improvements to any any 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 2017/18 Annual Governance Statement, other than to emphasise the importance of a clear conclusion arising from the 'review of effectiveness'.

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 Leadership Team (CLT).
34. Further to these monitoring arrangements, the Chief Finance Officer and the Assistant Chief Executive 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 CLTT 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 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 [2018-2021 Corporate Plan](#), is for a county where local residents and businesses can flourish - a thriving Oxfordshire.
2. In 2017/18 our Corporate Planning process was enhanced by the publication of a *Prospectus* to the Corporate Plan, effectively a summary of the Council's vision and priorities.

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. The Council has an Equalities Policy and we 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. A public consultation has been held to inform the review of the Equalities Policy and to inform the newly issued Equalities Policy 2018-2022.

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 Director of Law and Governance who is also 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 Chief Executive.

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.
20. During 2017-2018, the Council's Audit & Governance Committee engaged with the consultation from the Committee on Standards in Public Life on *Ethical Standards in Local Government*.

WORKING WITH OTHERS

Schools

21. 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.
22. 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.

23. 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

24. 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.

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

- Oxfordshire Partnership
- 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

